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HOW TO WINTER

FEBRUARY 2025

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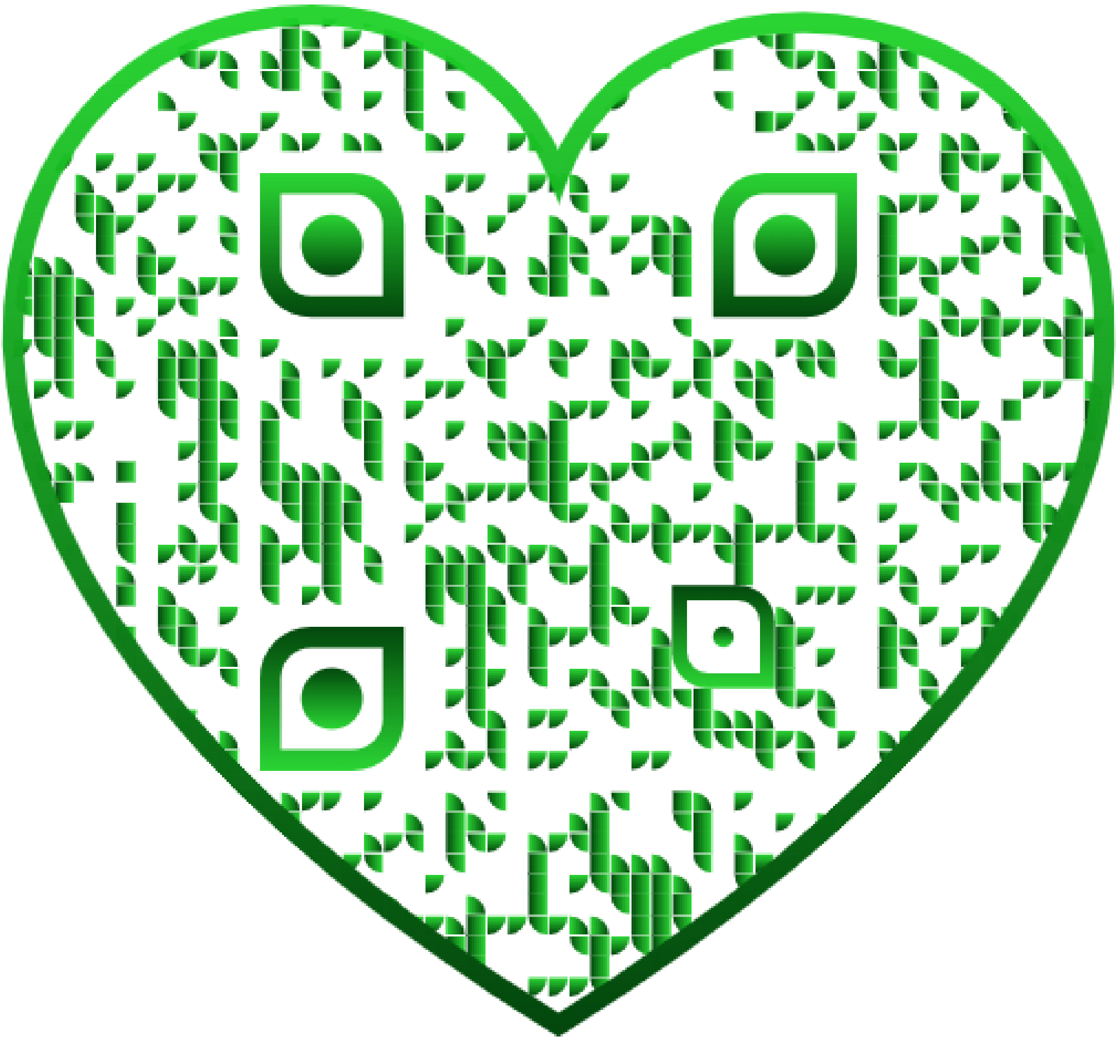

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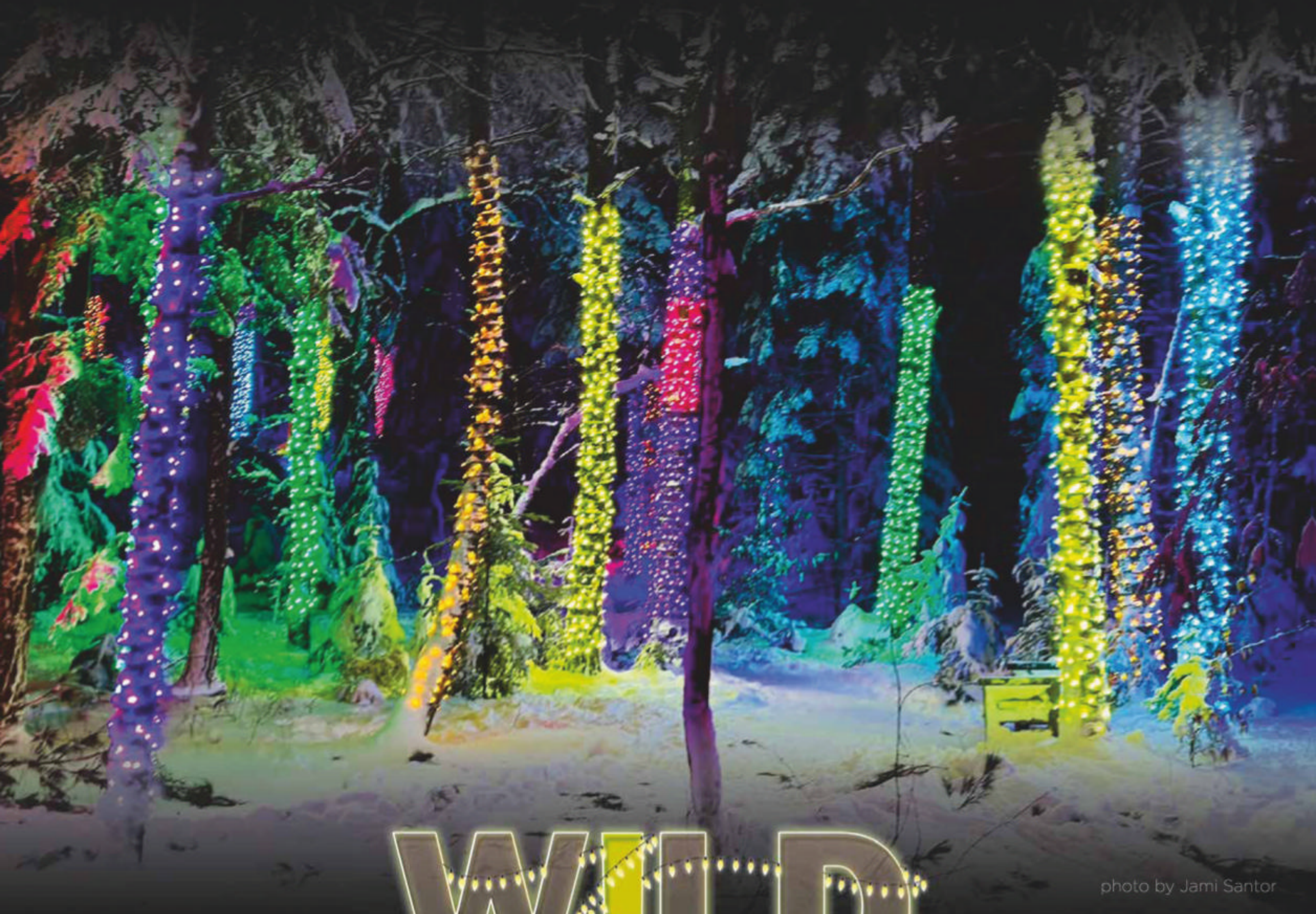

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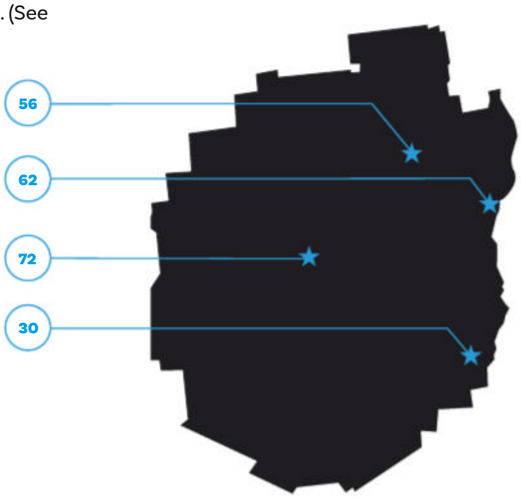

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COMFORT & JOY IN THE MOUNTAINS

HOMETOWN MUSIC

Joan Burke's story "Tahawus" (*My Hometown*, December 2024), about a town that no longer exists, reminded me right away of the song "The Street That Wasn't There," by Zoe Mulford.

Thank you, Joan, for sharing your Tahawus memories with us.

Diane Rockcastle Wiessinger
Tupper Lake, NY & Ithaca, NY

LOON LOVE

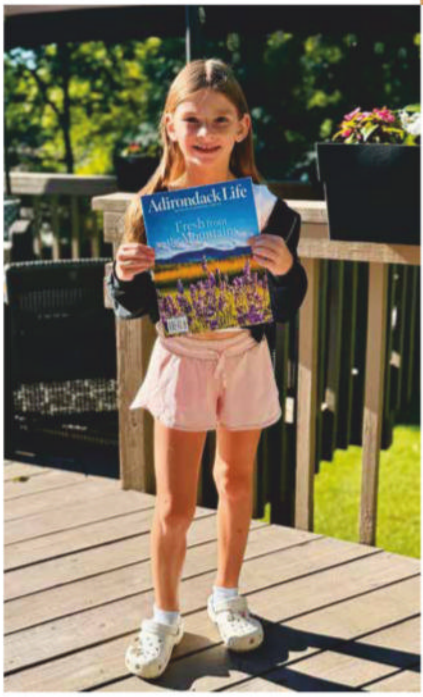
Thank you for the *Northern Lights* (December) article about Linnea! It was wonderful to know that she lived to return to the lake where she was born. Rescuing wildlife is so amazing!

Nina Schoch, Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation
Saranac Lake

ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN

I took this photo of Summer and Dottie in Wanakena, a hamlet with a community spirit like no other. There's also awesome beauty here. People call it "a little slice of heaven" and "a piece of paradise."

Tracy Bancroft Lasseter
via email



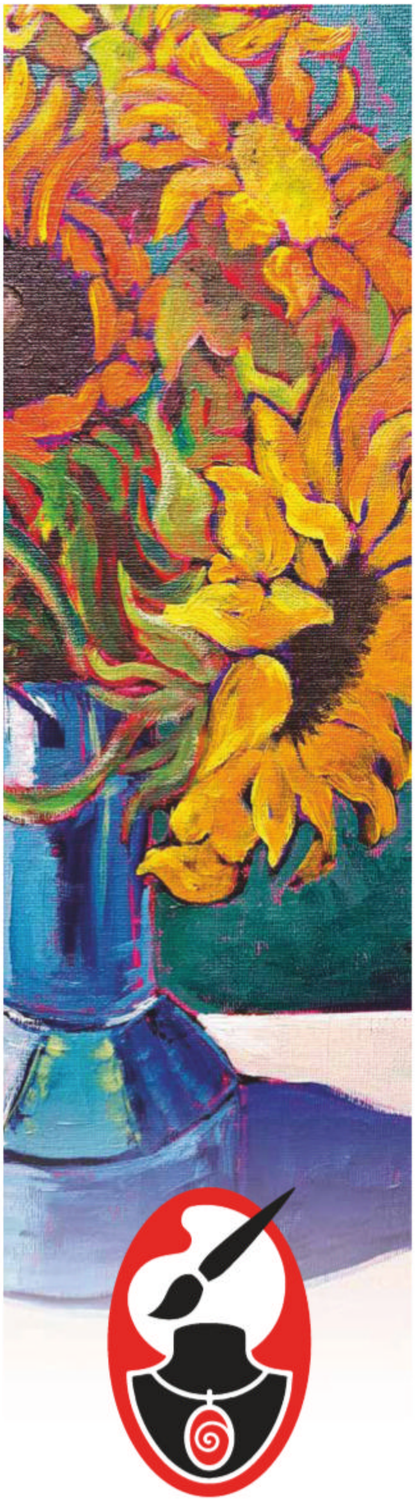
GEN ADK

Meet my godchild, Lexi, a new *Adirondack Life* subscriber! She's come to visit, but my hope is that the magazine will keep her interested.

Jeanne Finnerty
New York, NY and Jay, NY

Adirondack Life welcomes the views of readers. All letters are subject to editing, must be signed and should be addressed to Box 410, Jay, NY 12941.
Email: letters@adirondacklife.com

Do you have a story about New York's highest peak, Mount Marcy, that you'd like to share? Send it to aledit@adirondacklife.com with the subject line Marcy.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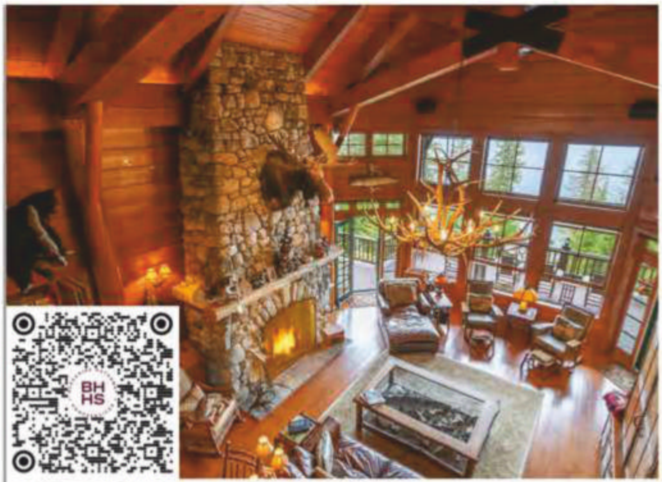

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The Healing Woods

How long-ago magic at Weller Pond is as relevant today as ever

BY ANNIE STOLTIE

Martha Rebentisch fell sick with the same disease that killed her mother. She dropped out of high school and left home in New York City to fight for her life at sanatoriums, where clean country air was the only hope for survival from tuberculosis, rampant at that time.

According to the Center for Disease Control, in the late 19th century and well into the 20th, one out of every seven people living in the U.S. and Europe succumbed to the bacterial disease. The odds were awful. In 1927 Martha came to Saranac Lake for treatment at the Trudeau Sanatorium, where she underwent a handful of procedures, including a thoracoplasty—removal of ribs from the chest wall to collapse the lung, the goal being to rest the organ and inactivate the disease.

She was still so sick, stuck in bed and, as the years fell away, losing hope.

The story, one that's been repeated again and again in the Adirondack canon, is that Martha saw an advertisement in a local newspaper in which a local guide offered to take an "invalid" into the woods for the summer to con-

The unlikely duo of Martha Rebentisch and guide Fred Rice, circa 1940.

PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE ADIRONDACK EXPERIENCE valesce. That guide was carpenter and boatbuilder Fred M. Rice, by then in his mid-50s and an expert and well-respected woodsman. It was 1931, the Great Depression in full swing. Fred and his wife, Kate, likely needed the money that would come from a long-term guiding gig. But living in Saranac Lake among so many TB patients taking the “fresh air cure”—sitting cocooned in blankets outside on porches—Fred wondered if there was a better way to wellness that involved the natural world, where you could hike and fish and paddle, muscles moving, lungs pushing mountain air in and out. He also figured that if anyone answered his ad it would be a man. He got Martha, ready to try anything to save her life.

What followed were six years of Fred and Martha camping in a platform-tent, spring through fall, on Weller Pond—an amoeba-shaped appendage of Middle Saranac—immersing themselves in the Adirondack wilds.

Martha got better. And she grew to prefer this solitary life surrounded by peaks, water and wildlife to anyplace else. She methodically journaled about her days at Weller, eventually compiling her entries into a best-selling memoir, *The Healing Woods: How My Search for Health in the Woods Opened Up a New Way of Life*, published in 1952 under the name Martha Reben. Two more books about her time in the outdoors with Fred followed—*The Way of the Wilderness* and *A Sharing of Joy*. She died in 1964 at 58, an age that exceeded anyone’s expectations.

Today Martha’s books are out of print, though you can find them in most Adirondack public libraries. Her writing relays how days were passed, with observations about flora, fauna, weather, seasons—a world we often overlook, trumped by the chaos of our modern lives.

Martha repeatedly credited Fred for saving her life and, yes, he brought her to the woods and showed her what to do. But it was the woods themselves, the ripple of Weller’s water, Boot Bay Mountain up above and the creatures she encountered that brought her back.

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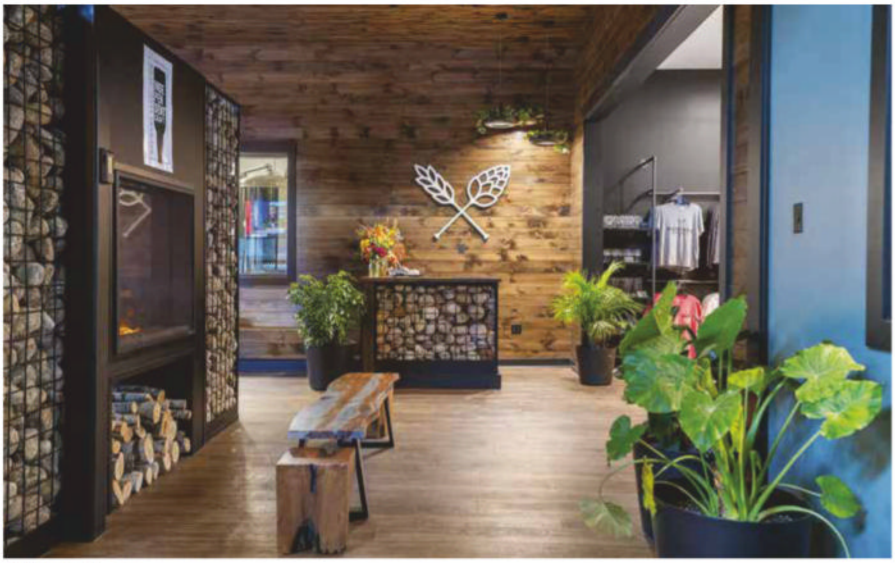

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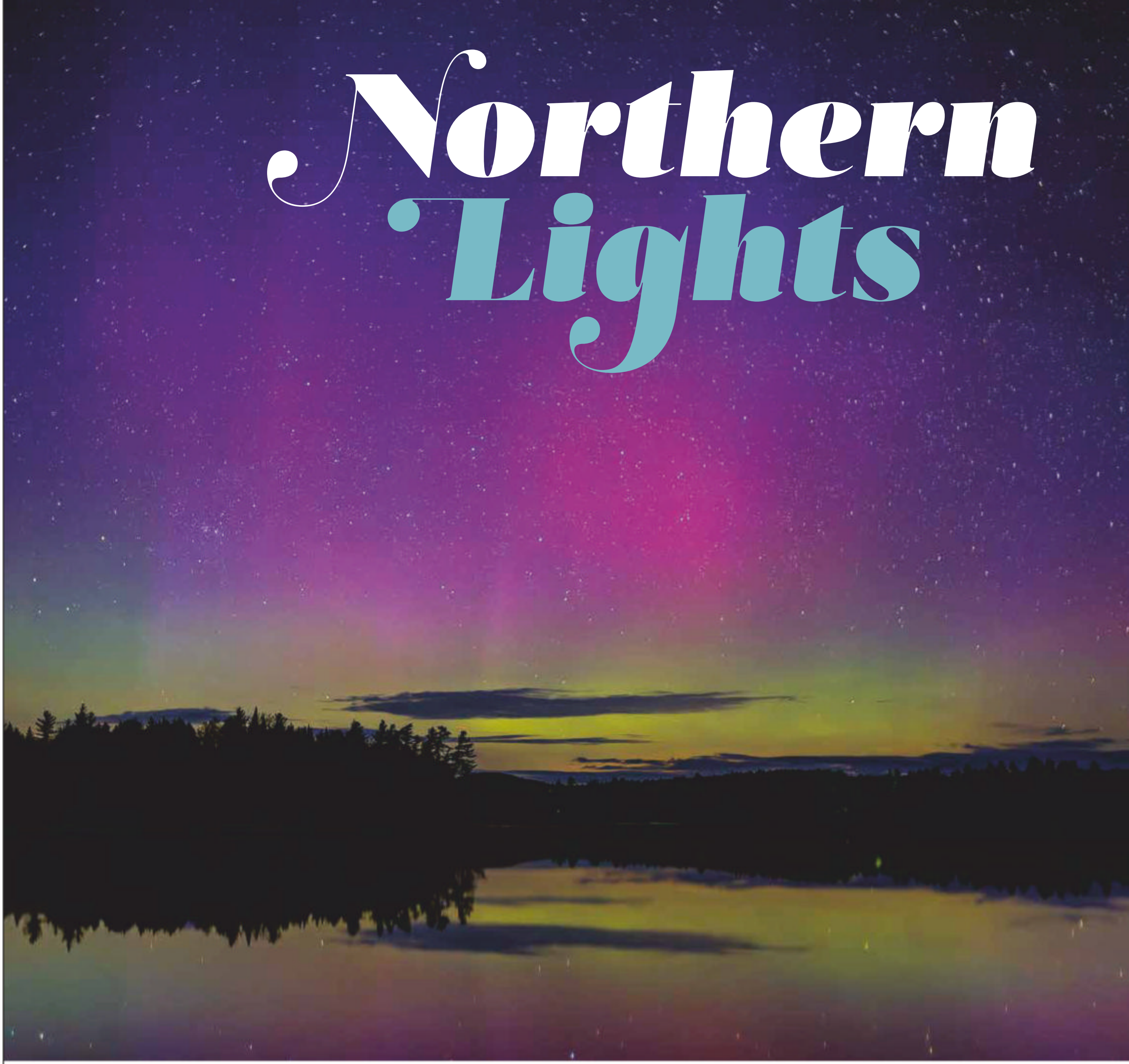
Northern Lights



FORKED LAKE PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF NADLER

Look Up

Showings of the northern lights, or aurora borealis, were more common at lower latitudes in 2024 due to the sun being at the solar maximum of its 11-year solar cycle, when the sun's magnetic poles flip and the star blazes with solar flares and coronal mass eruptions (CME), sending stronger streams of solar wind toward Earth. That activity is expected to continue in frequency into 2025.

There is no specific month, season, or time of night to look for auroras; they occur based on the timing, varying speeds, intensity, and angles of CMEs hitting Earth. To track the activity, photographer Jeff Nadler uses the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration aurora forecast (www.swpc.noaa.gov/products/aurora-30-minute-forecast), the SpaceWeather website (www.spaceweatherlive.com/en) and associated apps. He's also an administrator of the Facebook group Aurora Hunters of New York, which alerts members when the lights are out or expected with certainty.

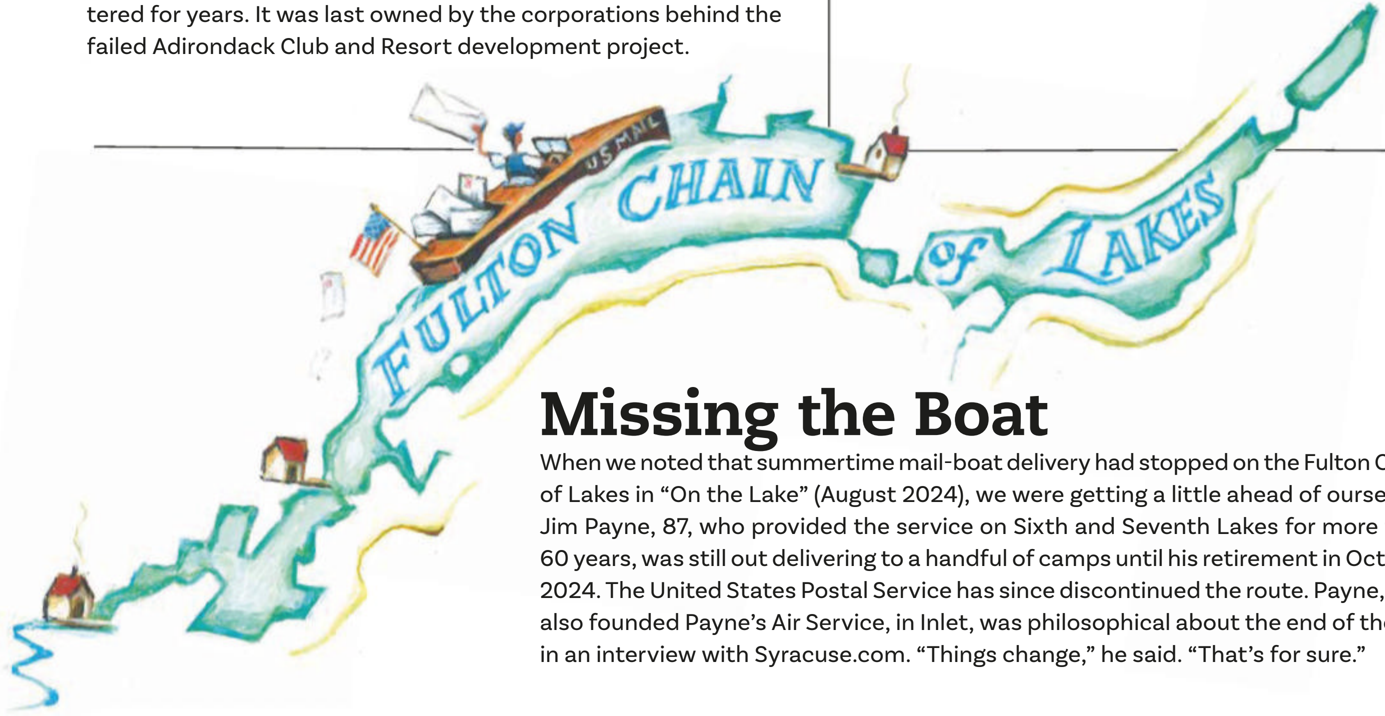
Ski Swap

After Franklin County foreclosed on the property for back taxes, Tupper Lake's beloved Big Tupper Ski Area ended up on the auction block in November. It sold for $650,000 to Josh Parnes and Martin Schapira, of Emerge Investment Management. The partners, who live in New Jersey but own second homes in Tupper Lake, told the *Adirondack Daily Enterprise* that they plan to restore public access to the ski area.

Big Tupper opened on Mount Morris in 1960 but has been shuttered for years. It was last owned by the corporations behind the failed Adirondack Club and Resort development project.

Easy Does It

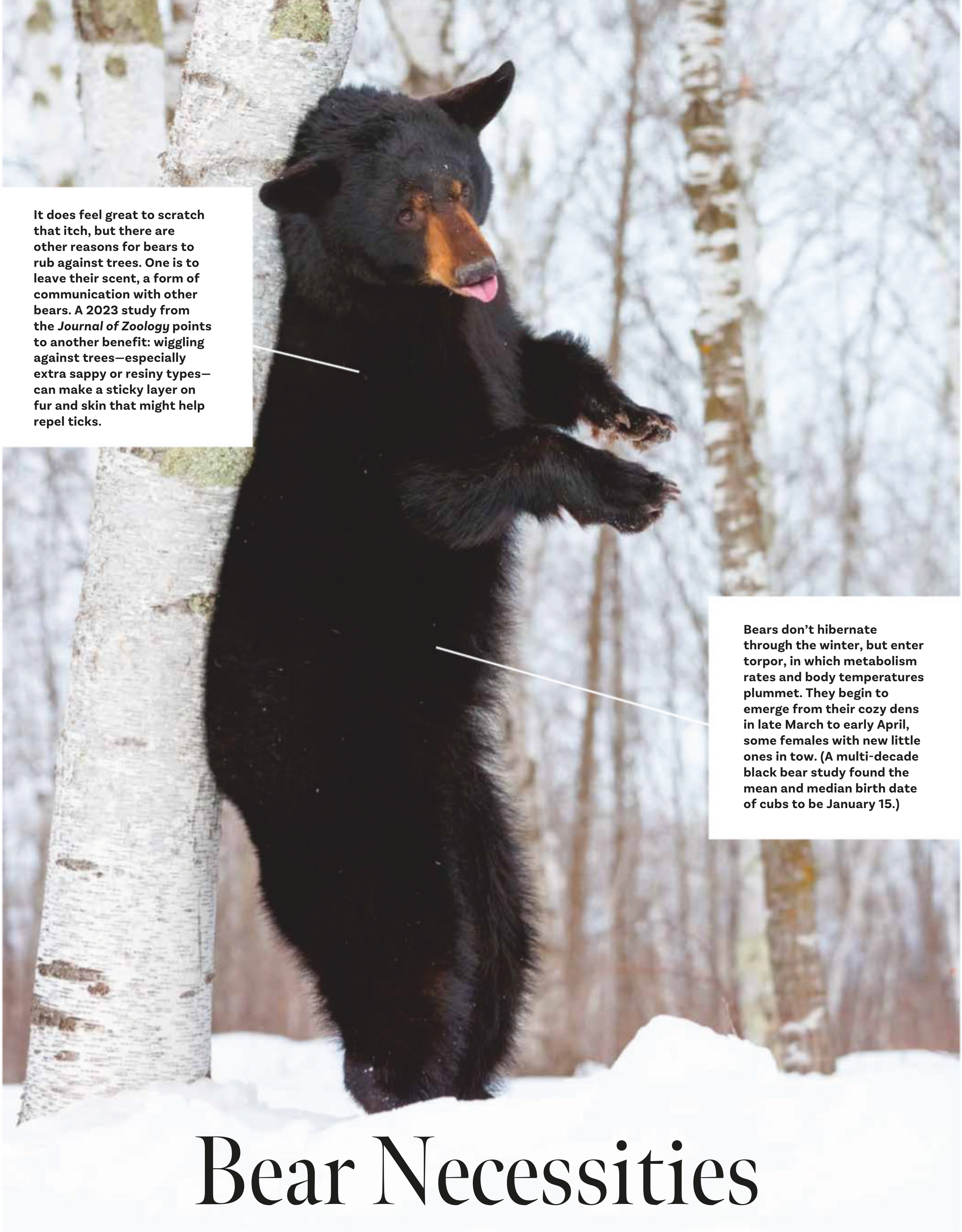
Looking for a low-impact snowshoe or cross-country-ski outing? Try the 2.5-mile out-and-back trail to Windfall Pond, in the Pigeon Lake Wilderness. From Inlet, follow Route 28 toward Old Forge. In Eagle Bay, turn right onto Big Moose Road. Parking will be about 3 miles on the right. The regularly plowed lot is also the parking area for Queer Lake, Chain Ponds, Cascade Lake and other treks.



Missing the Boat

When we noted that summertime mail-boat delivery had stopped on the Fulton Chain of Lakes in "On the Lake" (August 2024), we were getting a little ahead of ourselves. Jim Payne, 87, who provided the service on Sixth and Seventh Lakes for more than 60 years, was still out delivering to a handful of camps until his retirement in October 2024. The United States Postal Service has since discontinued the route. Payne, who also founded Payne's Air Service, in Inlet, was philosophical about the end of the era in an interview with Syracuse.com. "Things change," he said. "That's for sure."

FULTON CHAIN ILLUSTRATION BY TIM ZELTNER. BIG TUPPER PHOTOGRAPH BY CARL HEILMAN II. SNOWSHOE AND BEAR PHOTOGRAPHS FROM ISTOCK



It does feel great to scratch that itch, but there are other reasons for bears to rub against trees. One is to leave their scent, a form of communication with other bears. A 2023 study from the *Journal of Zoology* points to another benefit: wiggling against trees—especially extra sappy or resiny types—can make a sticky layer on fur and skin that might help repel ticks.

Bears don’t hibernate through the winter, but enter torpor, in which metabolism rates and body temperatures plummet. They begin to emerge from their cozy dens in late March to early April, some females with new little ones in tow. (A multi-decade black bear study found the mean and median birth date of cubs to be January 15.)

Bear Necessities

Please remember: When these omnivores make guest appearances among us, always give them space and never feed them, even unintentionally—keep food, garbage and strong scents contained. Last year a female and her two cubs got comfortable snacking at Nicks Lake Campground and other handy spots around Old Forge. When a crowd of onlookers treed the family in the hamlet, the mama bear became aggressive. All three had to be euthanized.

High Peaks Hero

Meet mountain chronicler Jonathan Zaharek

View of the Dix Range from Nippletop Mountain. Sunrise from Algonquin Peak.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF JONATHAN ZAHAREK

Long before Jonathan Zaharek stepped foot on an Adirondack mountain, his family had vacationed, summer after summer, in the southern park. It wasn't until about a decade ago that Zaharek discovered the High Peaks while attending school in Pottersville. He moved to Lake Placid in 2019 and, since then, has hiked the 46 many times over, always with a camera.

We caught up with the intrepid guide and photographer who's making a name for himself, particularly when it comes to capturing our region's loftiest peaks in the most extreme conditions.

Tell us about your work as a guide.

I am a licensed guide, but my primary focus is as a landscape photographer, artist and content creator. I aim to create content and resources that empower others to hike responsibly. My guidebook, *Hiking the Adirondack 46 High Peaks* (Falcon Guides, 2024), is a key part of that effort. It has been selling out since its release, and I see it as my way of giving back to the park, sharing knowledge for others to experience and respect the Adirondacks.

I find guiding incredibly rewarding—it allows for a connection with people who share my love for these mountains.

From December 2019 to March 2020 you hiked all 46 High Peaks and made a short documentary, *The Journey of a Winter 46er*. What inspired you to take on such a project—and do the hikes so quickly?

I was commissioned by the Lake Placid Center for the Arts for a groundbreaking project—a professionally documented single-season Winter 46. I photographed each one, creating an 18-part short documentary series on the experience.

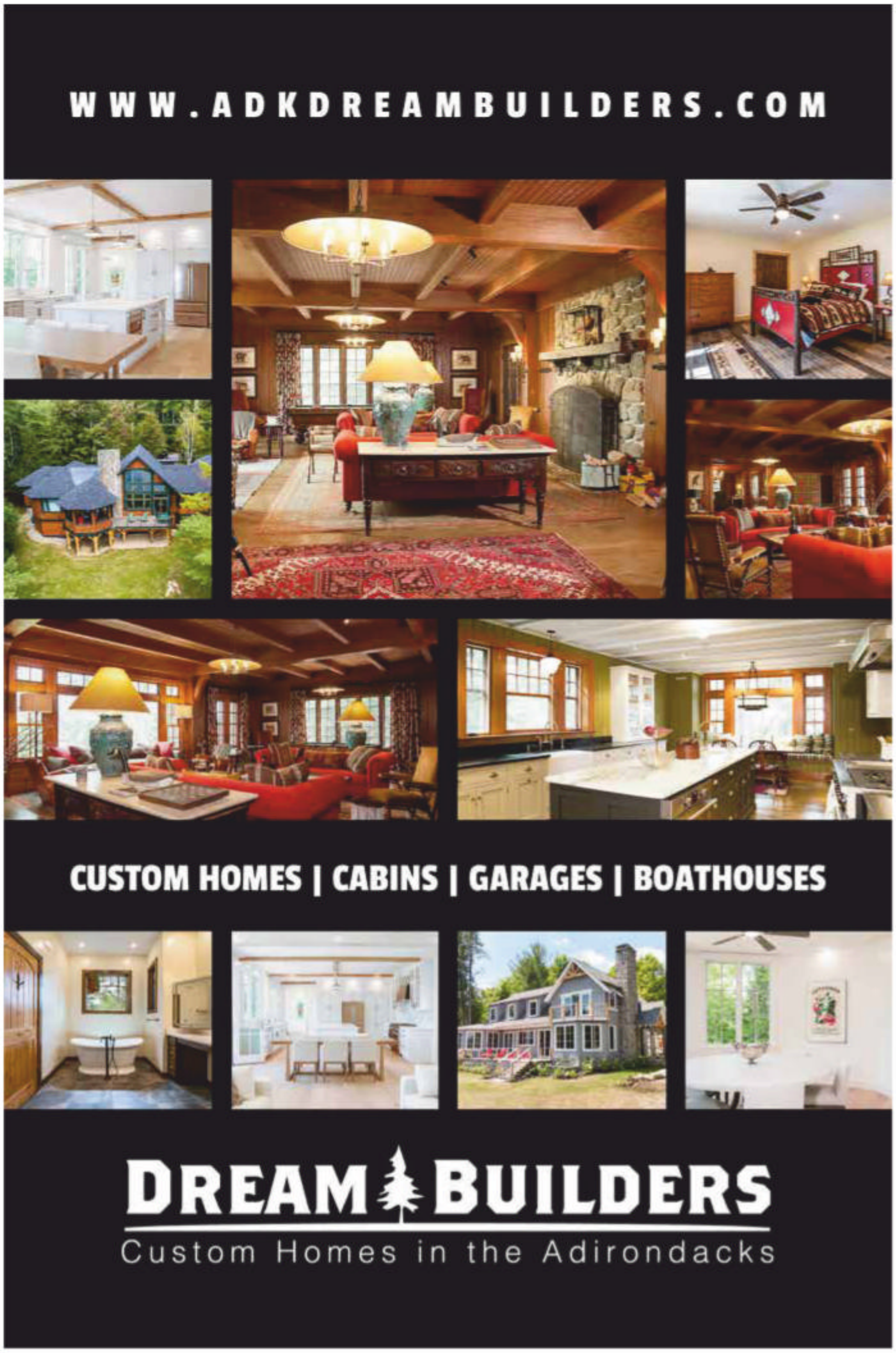
The project was a personal and professional challenge, blending my love for winter hiking with my commitment to capturing the intensity and beauty of these peaks. The project took determination, but living in Lake Placid allowed me to choose the best days for specific peaks. Since then, I've completed two more single-season Winter 46 rounds.

Why winter?
Winter transforms the Adirondacks in ways that other seasons don't—it's a time when the mountains seem to come alive in their own way. For me, the silence, solitude and challenge of winter in the High Peaks is unmatched, and over time, it's become my favorite season here. I love hiking and creating in all seasons, but winter hiking lets me use skills that make the experience particularly rewarding.

Winter landscapes inspire me to capture different perspectives and moods, from blizzards to clear, crisp days. I'm currently working toward skiing all 46 High Peaks, which is another way to explore this place's winter beauty. Winter isn't for everyone, but it's when I feel most connected to these mountains.

There are so many mountains in the Adirondack Park. Why focus on the High Peaks?
The High Peaks are considered the heart of the park, and there's a special allure to them that draws people in. I've hiked and explored many areas throughout the Adirondacks, but the High Peaks are where my passion as a photographer and hiker come together. The history and stunning vistas of each peak make them a central part of my work and connection to this region.

Throughout your documentary we see you in all conditions. What were your greatest challenges?
One of the toughest days was a 16-and-a-half-hour trek in the Seward Range. I thought skiing the approach would save time, but it became a burden. The added weight slowed me down, making the day more exhausting than anticipated. I also underestimated my caloric and water needs, which made it even tougher. Every hike taught me about planning, decision-making and resilience.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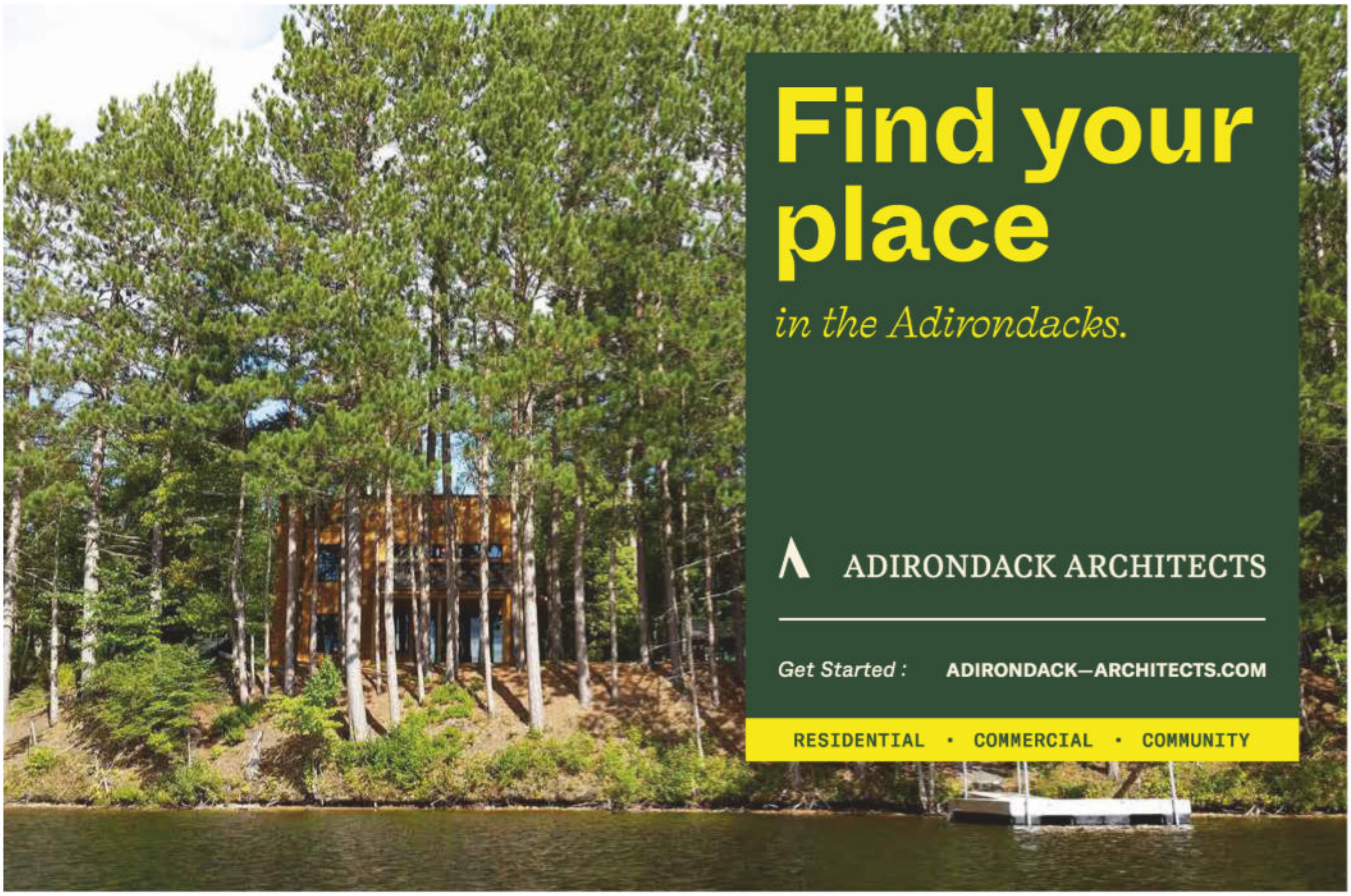
For your film you took on 18 hikes in total—you often summited multiple peaks per outing—covering 326 miles. What were your favorite moments?
I watched a sunset on Basin, which has one of the best views of all the High Peaks, and then set up camp between Basin and Haystack. The next morning, I watched the sunrise on Haystack, sitting in the early light with an amazing cloud formation above.

Do you worry about the future of our park as more and more hikers come here, particularly to the High Peaks?
I've come to see the balance between preserving this wilderness and welcoming others to experience it. I believe that fostering a love for the mountains is more impactful than simply regulating access. My guidebook is part of that—it's about helping people understand and appreciate this place so they'll respect it in return.

The Adirondacks will always need stewards, and I hope I'm doing my part. It's important to me that these mountains remain a place of natural beauty, where I can raise my family and where future generations can experience wilderness. I'm concerned about the park's future, but hopeful that we can preserve it by encouraging responsible recreation and true love. If you truly love something, you'll want to protect it. ▲

What would you say to hikers who want to take on a similar journey? Any advice?
These mountains will challenge you, but they'll also give back in ways you can't anticipate. The journey here isn't about conquering the peaks—it's about learning to overcome your own limitations. Every hike will test your endurance and determination, but the memories you create and the connections you build will last a lifetime. ▲

See more of Jonathan Zaharek's photographs, plus workshops, guided photography hikes and a link to his film, *The Journey of a Winter 46er*, at www.jonathanzphotography.com. Follow him on Instagram @jonathanzaharek.



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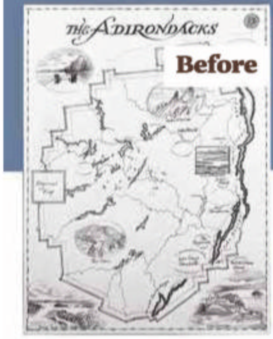
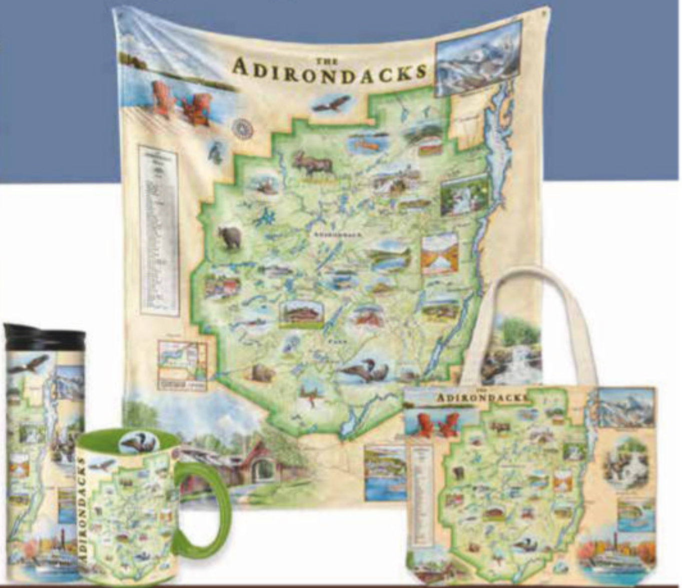


The Adirondacks
Before

The Adirondacks
After



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Adirondack Escape

When Harry Houdini transformed Lake Placid into a movie set

BY CLAYTON TRUTOR

If you check the index of any Harry Houdini biography, you will find an entry for Lake Placid. In the late winter of 1921, Houdini shot the cold-weather scenes for *The Man from Beyond* in and around the community. Houdini spent March and early April in Lake Placid before production shifted to Niagara Falls, the site of the film's climactic scene. Between Lake Placid and Niagara Falls, filming lasted 18 weeks, an extraordinarily expensive shoot for its day. At the time of *The Man from Beyond*'s April 1922 release, posters promoting the film depicted the cliffhanger scene at Niagara Falls, never referring to the significant portions of the film shot in the Adirondacks.

At the time he filmed *The Man from Beyond*, Houdini was one of the world's most famous people. For more than two decades, he had toured the world, stunning audiences with his ability to abscond from all manner of shackles, cells and perilous scenarios. *The Man from Beyond* was the first film that his Houdini Picture Corporation produced. Previously, he had appeared in a 15-part serial for Paramount Pictures entitled *The Master Mystery*, which had been a commercial and critical hit. Houdini sought to cut out the middleman both financially and artistically. He raised a reported $500,000 in operating capital to kick-start his movie business, which formed just weeks before he started shooting in Lake Placid.

Despite Houdini's worldwide fame, he kept a low profile around town. The *Adirondack Record* reported that "Houdini made no civilized scenes in Lake Placid" despite several weeks of filming in the area. Apparently he was a discreet guest of the Lake Placid Club and stayed for a while at Rose's Resort Inn on the outskirts of the village. He spent most of his time at Jacques Suzanne's "Movie Ranch" on Bear Cub Road, a couple of miles outside the village. Houdini filmed many of his Lake Placid scenes with Suzanne's team of famed sled dogs. A postcard featuring Houdini and a dog team was produced by I. L. Steadman, of the Lake Placid Club. A surviving copy, signed by Houdini, sold on eBay for more than $1,400 in 2021.

Suzanne was a figure of local intrigue. Born in Normandy in 1880, he was a painter turned dog trainer and explorer. He spent his 20s and 30s navigating the Arctic in search of the North Pole. When Robert Peary claimed to have reached the Pole in 1909 (he likely missed by a few miles), some of the dogs on his team had been bred by Suzanne.

Suzanne later settled in the Adirondacks and raised huskies and domesticated wolves on his estate. Suzanne, his dogs, and his ranch appeared in a half-dozen pictures during the 1910s and 1920s, including films featuring Silent-Era stars such as Conway Tearle, King Baggot and Eugene O'Brien. Wealthy visitors to the Adirondacks hired Suzanne and his sled-dog team for winter adventures well into the

A still frame from Houdini's 1922 film *The Man from Beyond.*

1960s, when he was nearly 80 years old. Suzanne's ranch was torn down after his death in 1967 and there are no obvious remains on Bear Cub Road.

Houdini wrote, produced and starred in *The Man from Beyond*. He hired Burton L. King to direct, whom he had worked with previously on *The Master Mystery*. Houdini displayed his physical prowess throughout the film—in every Adirondack scene he's shirtless and wearing what could best be described as bearskin swim trunks.

The Man from Beyond is part science fiction and part supernatural. Houdini plays a man named Howard Hilary, a ship's captain whose vessel wrecked in the Arctic Ocean in 1820. Hilary's body floated 1,000 miles northward to the Arctic Circle, where he spent the next century as an icicle inside a cave. A pair of modern-day explorers come upon Hilary, chop him out, thaw and resurrect him. One of the explorers brings Hilary back to America to show him to his brother, Dr. Strange, whose daughter Felice is to be married on the day Hilary arrives. Felice resembles Hilary's fiancé of 100 years earlier, also named Felice. Houdini's character breaks up her wedding, is sent to an insane asylum, breaks out and fights off multiple adversaries before rescuing Felice from an ill-planned canoe trip to Niagara Falls. This may be the longest 75-minute movie you will ever watch, with scenes lingering on for no clear reason.

According to Houdini's biographers, the film roughly broke even, a huge disappointment considering its time-consuming and expensive production. To boost the box office, Houdini toured with the film, performing escapes and other tricks after showings.

He produced a few more films before scrapping the venture in 1923. Audiences willing to pay top dollar to see Houdini perform death-defying stunts in person didn't seem as keen to see prerecorded versions. Only a few news reels of his work survive from the 1900s and 1910s, as well as a handful of feature-length films and serials. Scenes from Lake Placid make up a significant portion of that recorded legacy.

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Photo: Cody Johnson

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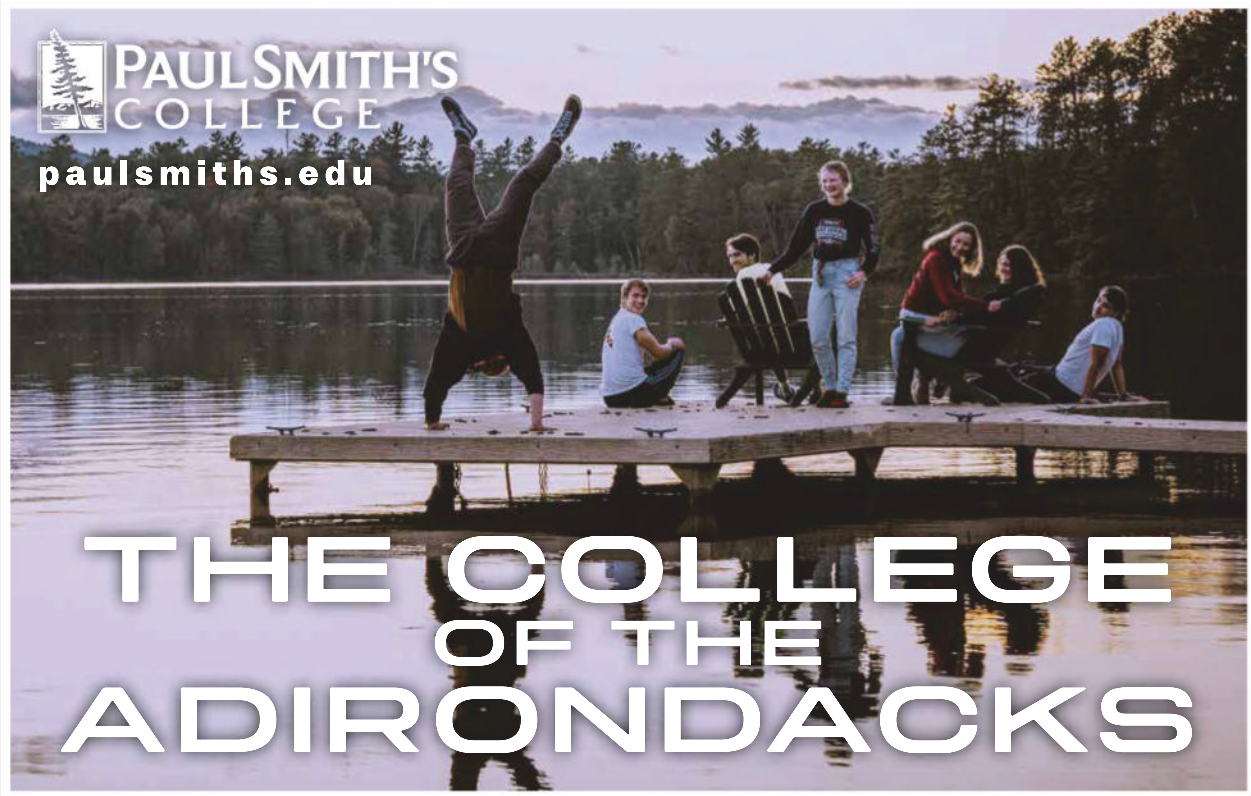
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Answering the Call

Adirondack forest rangers help a devastated North Carolina

BY EMILY RUSSELL

It was a little after midnight when a team of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) forest rangers arrived in North Carolina. Rain had been falling all evening and the wind would soon reach 40 mph.

"The hotel we were staying at, a half an hour after we arrived, the sign was literally torn off and it fell down into the road," said ranger Rob Praczkajlo.

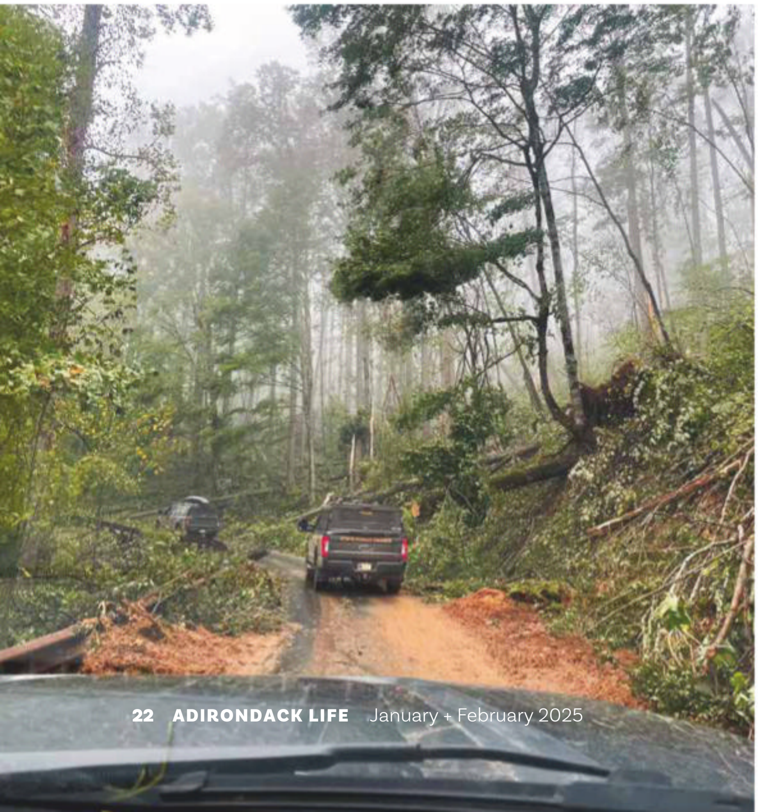
Praczkajlo, who is based in the High Peaks, traveled to Burnsville, North Carolina, with 15 fellow rangers last September to help with rescue and recovery efforts amid Hurricane Helene.

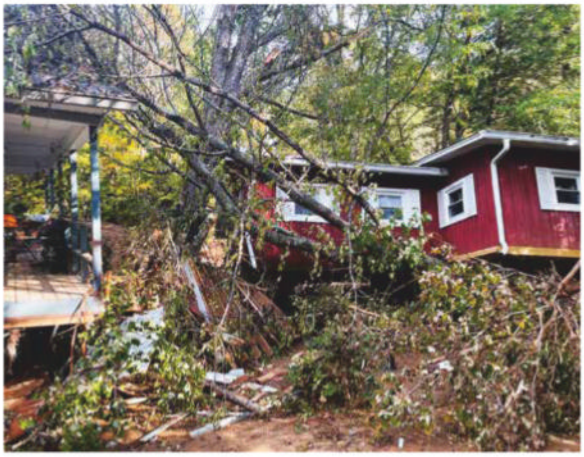
Burnsville is in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains, which stretch from Georgia up to Pennsylvania. The rural community of about 1,600 people sits in the shadow of the highest peak in the eastern US—Mount Mitchell.

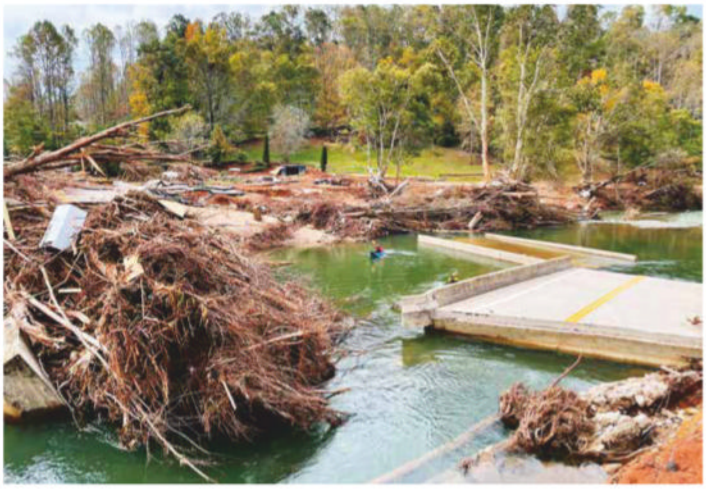
The rangers were the first swift-water team to arrive in the mountainous region prior to the storm. "So we were operational the next morning before the entire weight of the storm arrived," said Praczkajlo, "which, depending on where you were, was approximately 30 inches of rain that fell in 24 hours."

Compare that to 2011, when the remnants of Hurricane Irene dumped about eight inches of rain in parts of the Adirondacks. Praczkajlo said a storm as severe as Helene would have been catastrophic for northern New York.

"It would be as if every drainage between Plattsburgh and Watertown—all the northern Adirondacks that drain out of the High Peaks—if each one of those drainages had 30 inches of rainfall and devastated every community," he explained.







Post-Hurricane Helene scenes of destruction in Burnsville, North Carolina, captured by High Peaks forest ranger Rob Praczkajlo.

In Burnsville, the heavy rain that fell the night that forest rangers arrived filled the area's rivers and creeks. By the next day, a bubble of water burst, instantly flooding the mountain valleys.

"People talked about having three inches of water in their house at 7:30 in the morning, grabbing belongings, running to high ground, and within 30 seconds their house being washed away by a tidal wave of mountain water coming down and their house floating away and being destroyed," said Praczkajlo.

One of the rangers' first rescue missions was for two people who had tried to leave during the storm. "They had driven their car down toward the river, flipped it over, and were crushed against a tree," explained Praczkajlo.

One person suffered a severe back injury, so rangers and paramedics hiked three miles to the crash site, provided initial medical care, and carried the injured person three miles back to an ambulance.

During their two weeks in North Carolina, rangers completed dozens of rescues and evacuations and recovered the bodies of people who had been killed during the storm.

The out-of-state mission was one of many in recent years in which New York State rangers have been deployed. They have helped fight wildfires in Canada as well as in California, Colorado, South Dakota, Idaho and Montana. They've also helped with storm responses in Kentucky and Puerto Rico.

"When we are able to support other states on large-scale incidents, our rangers bring that experience home with them," said Forest Ranger Captain Dave Kallen, who added that these missions pay "exponential dividends on our state's ability to safely, appropriately, and economically react to an incident."

In the Adirondacks, search-and-rescue missions are changing as the climate changes. According to the 2024 *New York State Climate Impacts Assessment*, average temperatures in our region could rise by more than six degrees Fahrenheit by the 2050s and more than 10 degrees by the 2080s. Winter precipitation across northern New York is expected to in-

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crease, but more will fall as rain rather than snow, creating increasingly difficult and dangerous conditions for both hikers and rescuers in the mountains.

The impacts of climate change in the Adirondacks are different than what areas like coastal Florida or the mountains out West are experiencing, but our region is still susceptible to extreme weather events such as flash floods, ice storms, wildfires and tornadoes.

In 2024, more than 30 tornadoes touched down across New York State, a record high. During a single day in July, seven tornadoes ripped through the southern Adirondacks, downing trees, damaging homes and causing widespread power outages.

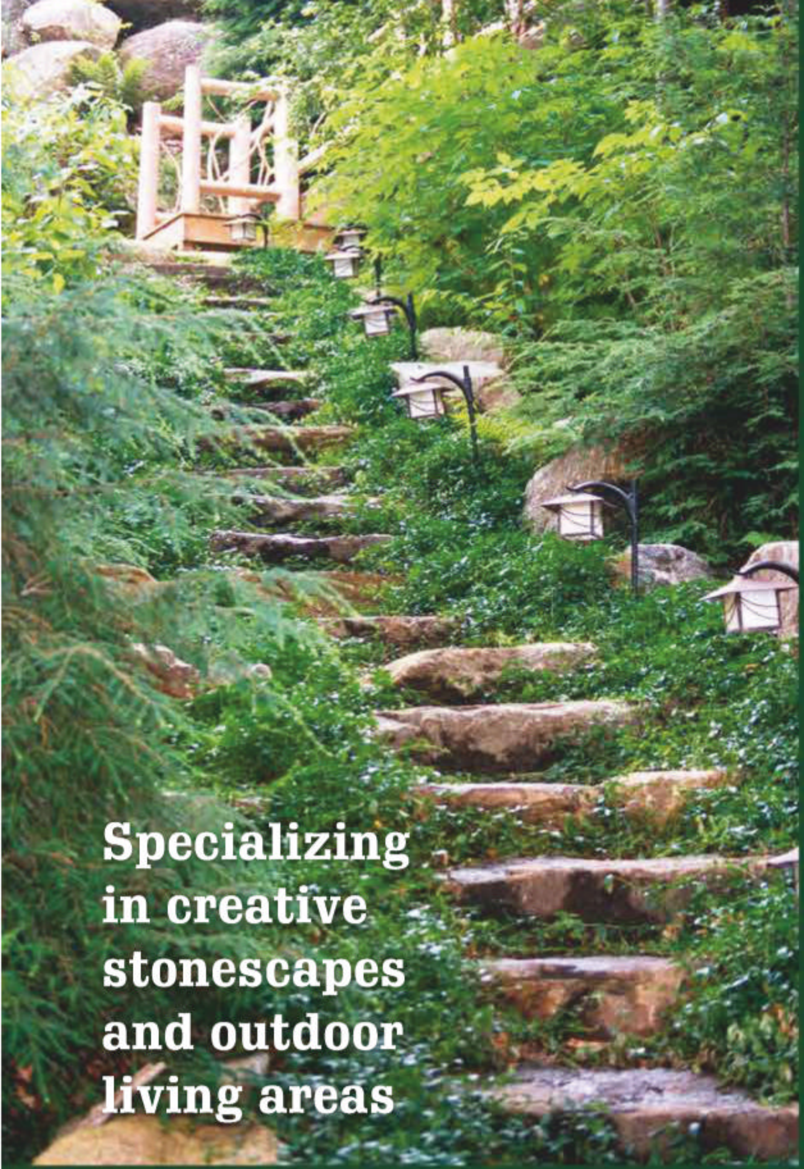
"It seems more and more each year, our communities are impacted by flooding and severe storm damage," said Erin Hanczyk, a spokesperson for the DEC who lives in the Adirondacks.

Hanczyk spent two weeks in North Carolina in the wake of Hurricane Helene, serving as a public information officer. "It was heartbreaking to watch western North Carolina face such devastation and I wondered how we, as small mountain towns in New York, can learn from their experience to prepare for when something as devastating inevitably hits us," said Hanczyk.

According to the DEC, swift-water training, equipment and response programs have adapted in recent years to better meet the challenges of flood response in New York State.

Forest rangers, including Praczkajlo, were among the first responders in 2011 when Tropical Storm Irene hit the Adirondacks. They helped clear trees from roadways, responded to flood rescues, and aided with damage assessments.

Irene caused more than $1 billion in damages across New York. Officials in North Carolina estimate that Helene, which damaged more than 126,000 homes and 6,000 miles of roads, could cost the state more than $50 billion."It was really hard to see how devastated these people's lives are," said Praczkajlo, "but it's a beautiful place and things will grow back."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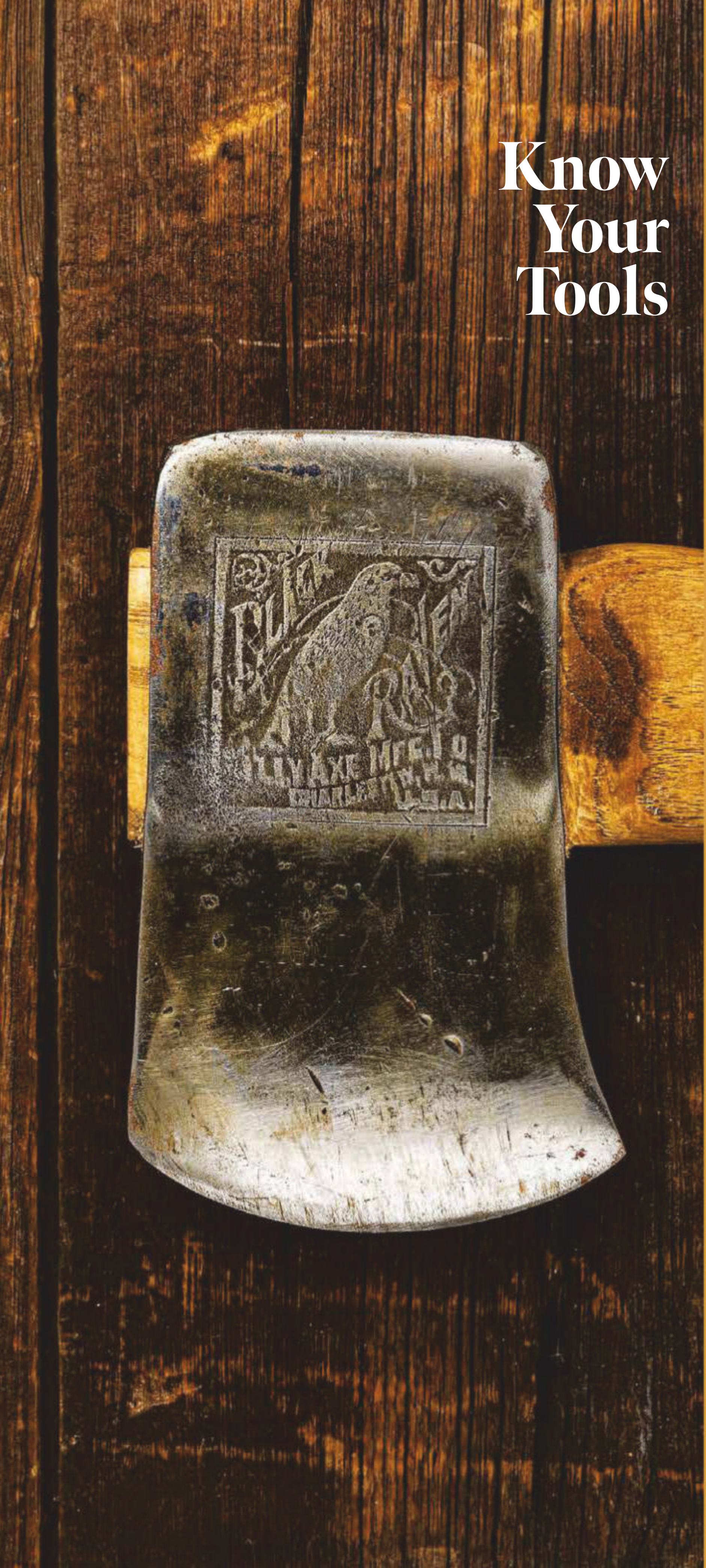


Know Your Tools

FOR MANY, STAYING WARM in winter means quality time with an axe. Ever consider the provenance of yours? Or the go-to for Adirondackers of the past? Axe aficionado Brett McLeod breaks it down:

As an axe collector, I've spent my fair share of time crawling through abandoned barns, visiting tag sales and pawing around old homestead sites. With logging as a principal industry for more than a century, it isn't surprising that old axes turn up regularly across the Adirondacks. What is surprising is that one axe, the Black Raven (shown at left), enjoyed huge regional popularity beginning in the early 1900s and turns up more frequently in this region than other parts of the country. This axe cost more than the competition but was known for its quality steel and classy etching on the cheek of the axe.

The Black Raven axe was introduced by the Kelly Axe Manufacturing Company in 1904. It was manufactured at their foundry in Charleston, West Virginia, and was considered to be a premium axe, with some of the etchings gilded in gold paint (actually a mix of bronzing powder and varnish). These axes also seemed to receive more real estate in wholesale tool catalogs, often to the exclusion of other Kelly brands.

The Black Raven etching was found on single-bit felling axes, double-bit axes, hatchets and, beginning in 1920, on scythes. The earlier Black Raven axes read "Kelly Axe Mfg. Co." directly under the raven. The later Black Raven axes read "The American Fork and Hoe Co," which was a separate branch of the company that took over in 1930. Additionally, these later Black Raven axes also included a "True Temper Kelly Works" etching near the poll of the single-bit axe, and on the opposite side as the raven etching on the double-bit axes. The smaller axes and hatchets used a circular etching of the raven.

It comes as little surprise that collectors would seek out the Black Raven since it is so distinct. As with all vintage axes, the price is influenced by the condition of the axe. Pristine examples can bring auction prices north of $1,000. The good news is that collectors still report finding Black Raven axes at barn sales, auctions and flea markets for a few dollars.

Brett McLeod is author of *American Axe: The Tool that Shaped a Continent* (Storey Publishing) and professor of forestry at Paul Smith's College. Find McLeod's 2025 Vintage Axes Wall Calendar at www.hachettebookgroup.com.

Make Traditional North Country Hand-Warmers: Buff Mittens

AS WITH KNITTING ITSELF, no one really knows the origins of buff mittens (shown above, front right). Today, antique examples are found in the Adirondacks, New England and Canada, wherever there were loggers, winter and work in the woods. Coming from different places and never mass produced, the homemade hand-warmers have been known by names such as shag or shagged mittens, fringe, buff or latch-hook mittens—all references to the yarn that forms a thick pile on the surface of the knit fabric.

Because of the way they were made—and made with wool—buff mittens were warm, windproof and practically waterproof. This is due to the "sticky" nature of wool fibers, which bind together and "felt" when rubbed, especially in the presence of moisture. After a few wearings, buff mittens tended to felt-up slightly on the inside, making the fabric tight.

I learned buff knitting from the late Katie Baker Cross, of Johnsburg. Born in 1916, she grew up on a farm in Thurman where her father raised sheep and her mother spun wool and made buff mittens, selling them in Warrensburg and filling orders from men in lumber camps. Cross explained the process simply: you knit the regular way and use a different color yarn to make loops between the stitches. *—From Handcrafted Traditions: Buff Mittens (February 2001), by Jane MacKintosh*

For a step-by-step guide to making Katie Cross's buff mittens, visit www.adirondacklife.com.

RECIPE

Heat Your Core

Adirondack Toddy

1 ½ ounce Applejack
1 tablespoon maple syrup
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 cup hot water
Garnish with a cinnamon stick

Get Out and Play

Long Lake Winter Carnival
Long Lake's Mount Sabattis Geiger Arena hosts free skating, sledding and food, plus an ice-sculpture garden, cardboard sled races, frying-pan tosses, a bonfire and fireworks.
January 18, www.mylonglake.com

Funky Ice Fest, Lake George
The Adirondack Brewery keeps it disco-party cool with an ice bar and sculptures, music and food.
January 24–25, January 31–February 1
adkbrewery.com

Saranac Lake Winter Carnival
This year's theme is "Music Legends"—10 days of rocking 'round the clock, plus contests, parades, fireworks and the iconic ice palace.
January 31–February 9
www.saranaclakewintercarnival.com

Old Forge Winter Carnival
The slopes of McCauley Mountain transform into carnival headquarters for a weekend, with night skiing, daredevil jumpers, a sculpture contest, fireworks, s'mores and more.
February 8–9, www.oldforgeny.com

Raquette Lake Winter Carnival
President's Day Weekend brings an obstacle course, sack races, ice golf, cross-cut and chainsaw competitions and other traditional fun.
February 15–16, www.mylonglake.com

Frozen Fire and Lights, Inlet
Snowshoeing, skiing, skating, tobogganing and a cardboard sled race at Fern Park, plus outhouse races behind the Wood's Inn. Then bonfire, hot dogs and fireworks at Arrowhead Park.
February 22, www.inletny.com

BrewSki, Tupper Lake
This cross-country-ski tasting tour adds local brewery sample stations and fire pits to the James C. Frenette Sr. Recreational Trails.
February 22, www.tupperlake.com

Lake George Winter Carnival
Just one day of fun? Not for Lake George. That community hosts cook-offs, wacky races and contests, plus kids' activities, bonfires and fireworks every weekend in February.
February 1–2, 8–9, 15–16, 22–24
www.visitlakegeorge.com

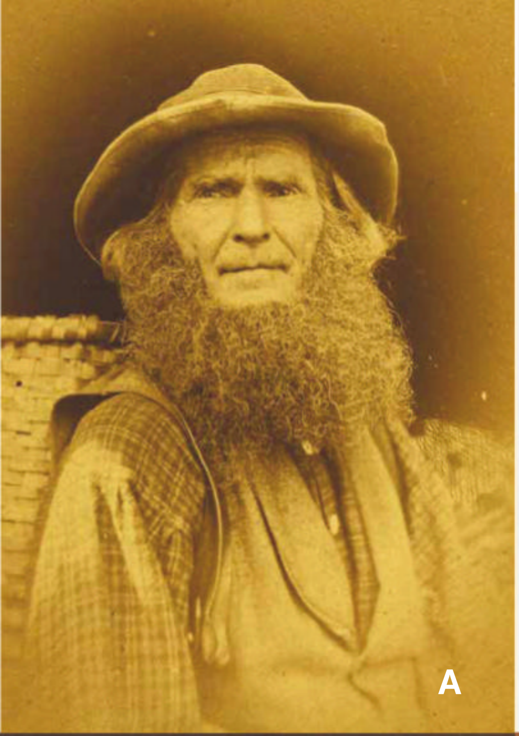
BUFF MITTEN AND BEARD PHOTOGRAPHS FROM ADIRONDACK EXPERIENCE. TODDY PHOTOGRAPH FROM ISTOCK. PAGES 26-27: CASCADE PHOTOGRAPH BY NANCIE BATTAGLIA. AXE PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF BRETT MCLEOD

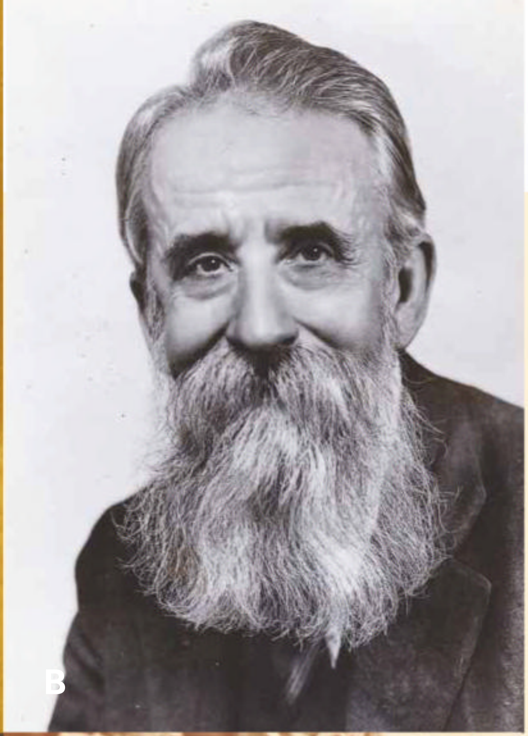
Grow a Beard

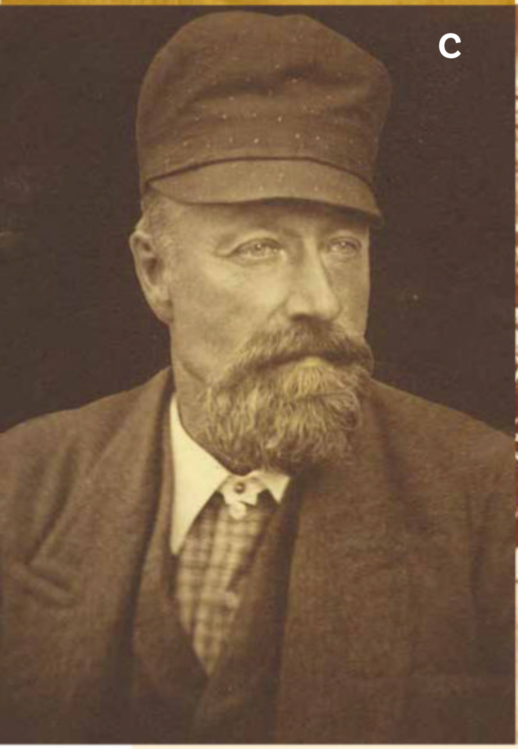
WHISKERS AREN'T JUST THE PERFECT CHEEK BLANKETS. Bob Seidenstein, of Saranac Lake's Brothers of the Bush—a beard-booster club that marches in the town's winter carnival parade—says whiskers are "a great tribute to indolence. There's not many things where you don't do anything and you have something great to show for it."

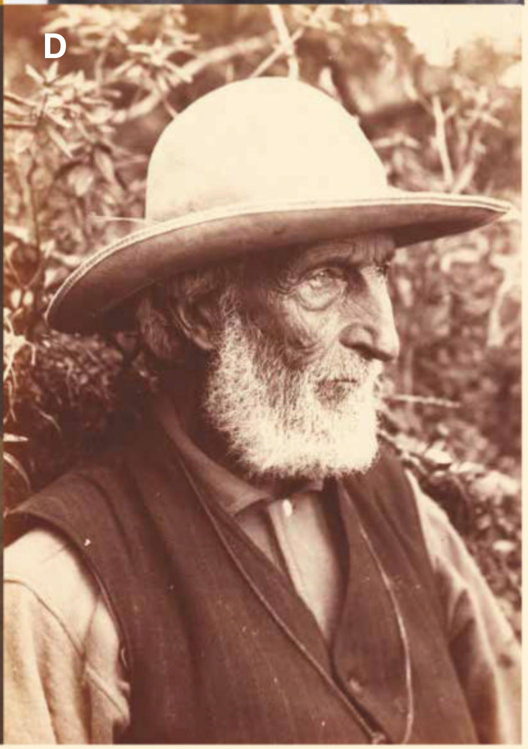
For those building a new chin nest, Seidenstein concedes that the hardest part is getting over the initial itchy stage. "It can be maddening," he says. "But you just have to gut it out. This is art we're talking about, and we all know you have to sacrifice for art."

Ready to embrace the fuzz but don't know a mutton chop from a chin strap? Take some style tips from a few of the original Adirondack fashion plates.









A The Phelps

Trailblazing High Peaks guide Orson Phelps favored a boisterous version of the traditional Donegal beard—all business up-top, a wild party down below.

B The Rondeau

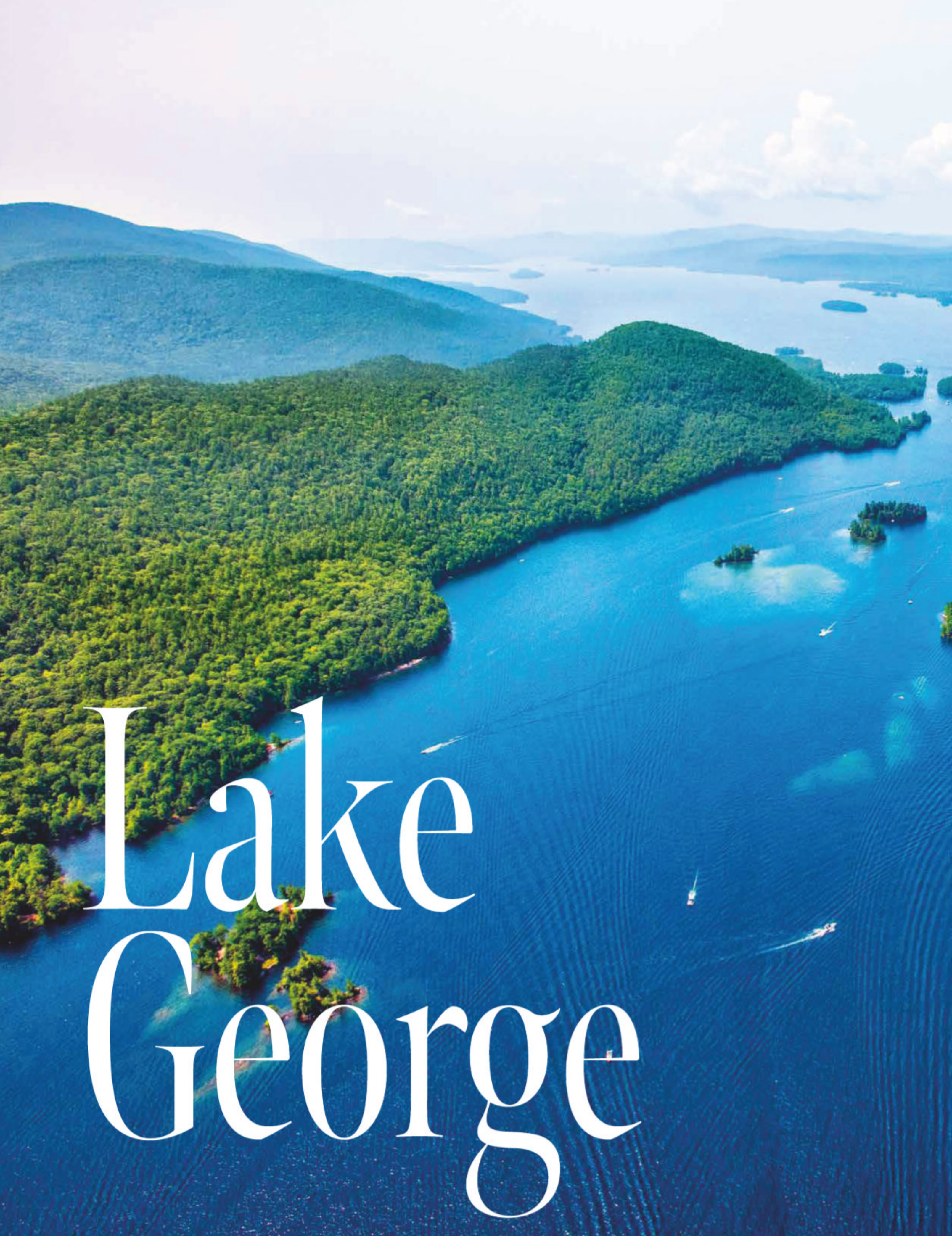
Living deep in the Cold River wilderness meant never having to put on airs, so hermit Noah John Rondeau let his beard and mustache grow to luxurious lengths. Those abundant whiskers eventually won him a part-time gig as old Saint Nick at Santa's Workshop, in Wilmington.

C The Paul Smith

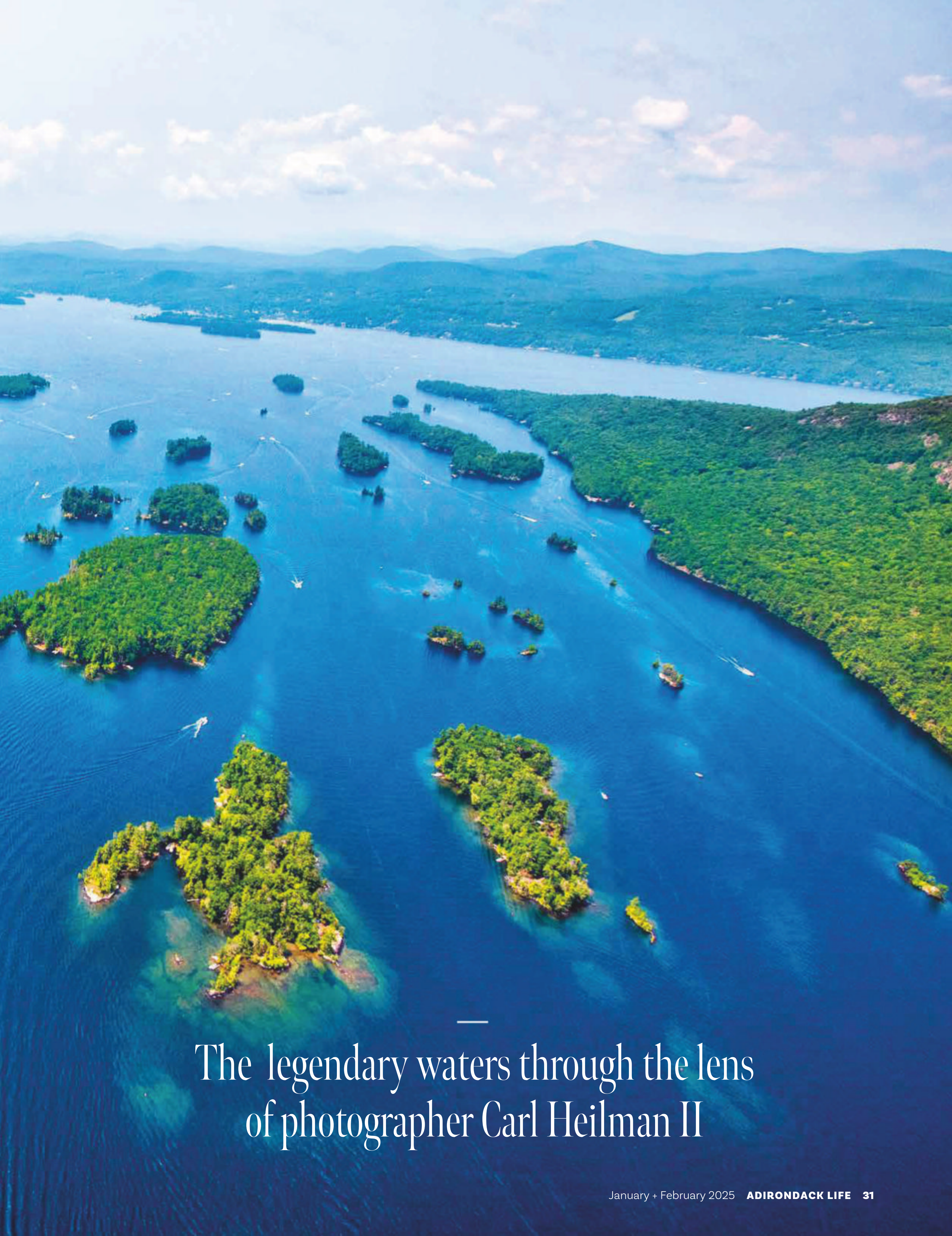
A well-groomed circle beard—a style frequently mistaken for a goatee (which has no mustache) or a Van Dyke (where the mustache and beard don't touch)—was part of the uniform for affable hotelier Apollos "Paul" Smith.

D The Dunning

Although hermit Alvah Dunning, who tramped around the Raquette Lake region in the latter half of the 19th century, was famously temperamental—he feuded with pulp-novelist Ned Buntline and grumbled that his woods were "a-gettin' too full o' people fer comfort"—his neatly trimmed boxed beard was well behaved.



Lake George



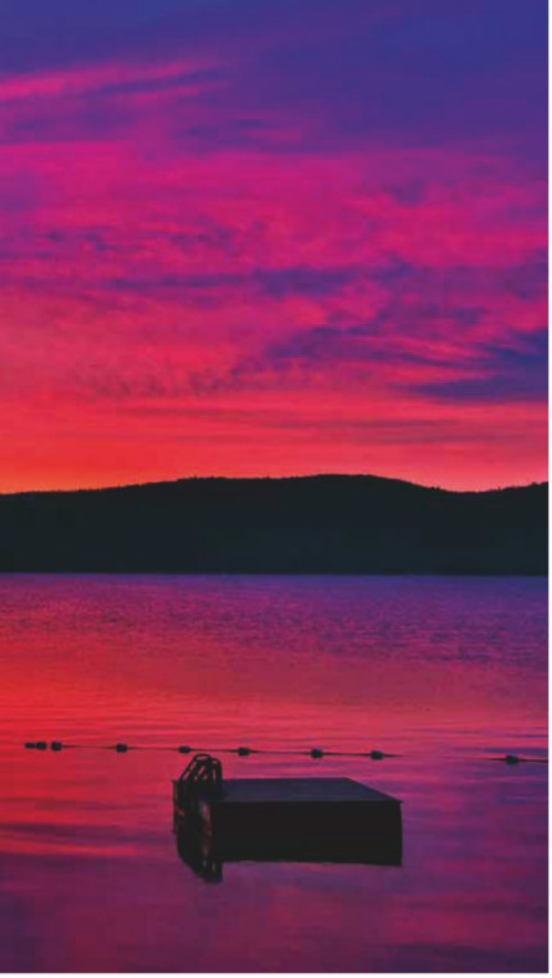
The legendary waters through the lens of photographer Carl Heilman II

S

SPECTACULAR, MAGNIFICENT, incomparable Lake George. … As President Thomas Jefferson wrote in a letter to his daughter dated May 31, 1791: "Lake George is without comparison, the most beautiful water I ever saw; formed by a contour of mountains into a basin … finely interspersed with islands, its water limpid as crystal, and the mountain sides covered with rich groves … down to the water-edge: here and there precipices of rock to checker the scene and save it from monotony." My latest Lake George photography book features the beautiful lake and scenic mountains, bubbling streams and waterfalls, and quaint hamlets and byways within the Lake George basin.

In the 15 years I've explored the region since my first book, I've been able to cover even more ground, since new land purchases by the Lake George Land Conservancy have opened up additional locations for public access. Lake George has more than 300 islands, a maximum depth of 195 feet, and varies from one to three miles in width over its 32-mile length. The Narrows, the most dramatic section of the lake, is flanked by wild mountains whose steep, rocky shoulders rise as much as 2,300 feet above the lake. Many of the mountains surrounding the lake are state owned and protected as "Forever Wild" by the New York State Constitution and are as wild as they were centuries ago when indigenous people traveled and camped throughout this region.

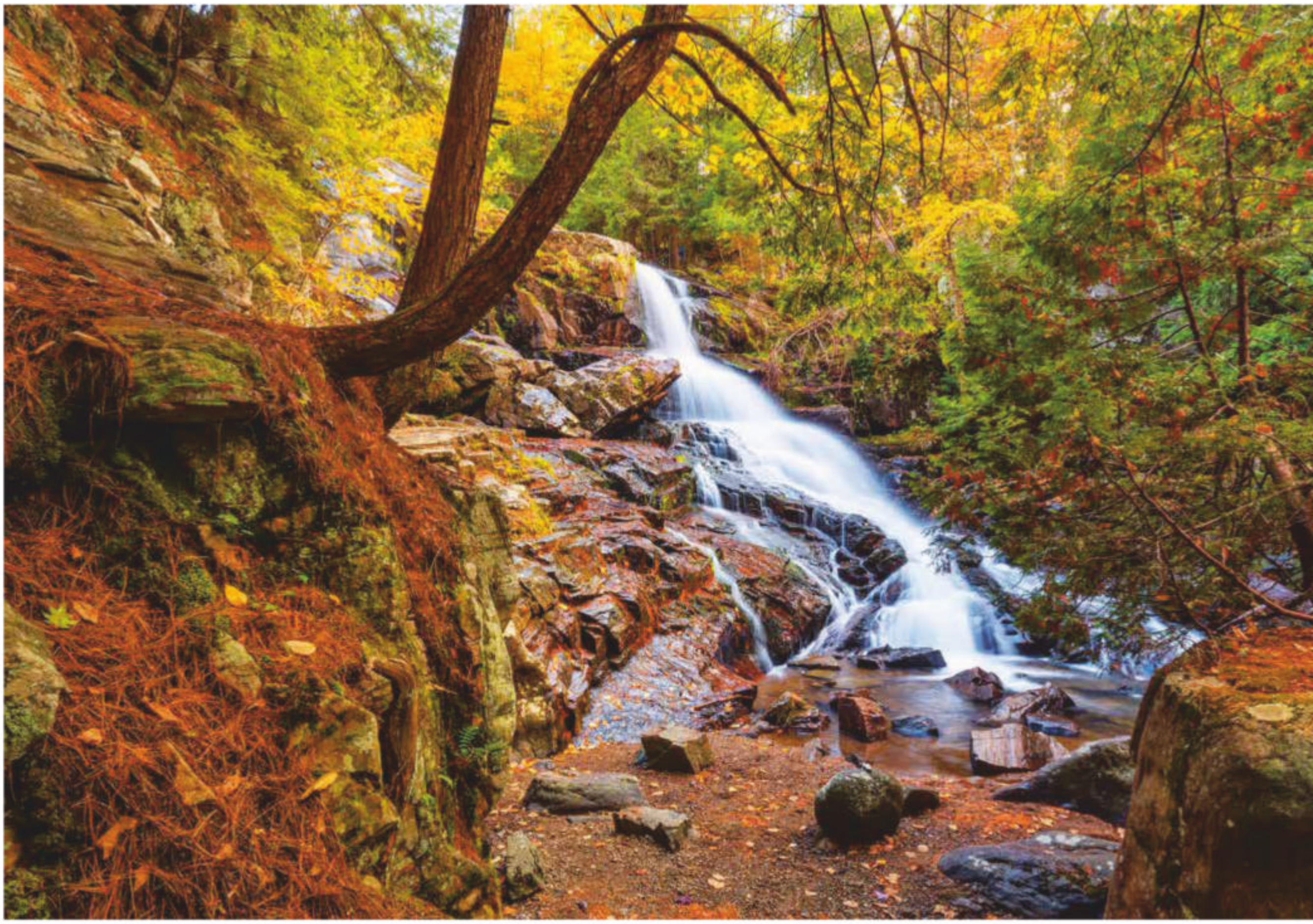
CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: **Looking south from Huletts Landing. September sunrise at the Trout House Village dock and raft in Hague. Early morning clouds over northern Lake George. Autumn in Bolton Landing.** PAGES 30–31: **Aerial view of The Narrows.**



In some ways Lake George has changed very little—its beauty, charm and wildness draws visitors back to the area year after year. But there have been significant changes in growth around the lake and in the environmental quality of the water and landscape. Lake George has some of the cleanest water in the state, but development throughout the watershed has contributed to sedimentation and water-quality concerns. Stormwater runoff, lawn chemicals and nonnative invasive species are a few of the ecological issues facing the lake today.

Groups work to protect the environmental quality of the Lake George basin, including the Lake George Association, the Lake George Land Conservancy and Lake George Waterkeeper, in addition to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Their mission is to safeguard the watershed, regulate sustainable growth and protect the rich environmental and historical character of the Lake George basin. With a conscientious effort on the part of everyone who visits and lives around the lake, it will be possible to maintain the unparalleled qualities of Lake George and its "blessed waters" for generations to come.

Carl Heilman II's *Lake George*, which includes 235 photographs and panoramas, is available at www.carlheilman.com.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: **The *Lac du St. Sacrement* in a fresh coat of ice at the Lake George Steamboat Company dock. Aerial view of Rogers Rock, Cook Mountain, Anthony's Nose and Glenburnie. Shelving Rock Falls, on the east side of the lake.**

LEARNING HOW TO FALL

BY JOE CONNELLY

My first year on ski patrol at Gore Mountain

FROM LEFT: **Gore Mountain and the Stooges—Don Townley, Mark "Bean Dip" Anderson, Geoff Merrett and Joe Connelly. Bean Dip plays a burning piano at a Gore Mud Party, 2001.**

I'VE BEEN A SKI PATROLLER AT GORE MOUNTAIN, in North Creek, for more than 20 years, and in that time I've seen a lot of change, more trails, more lifts and more skiers, so much so that Gore now ranks as one of the biggest in the East and is a blast to ski. But no matter how much more Gore I get, it will never be as fun as my first year there, when I was a Stooge who couldn't ski, and Bean Dip gave me a job on top of the world.

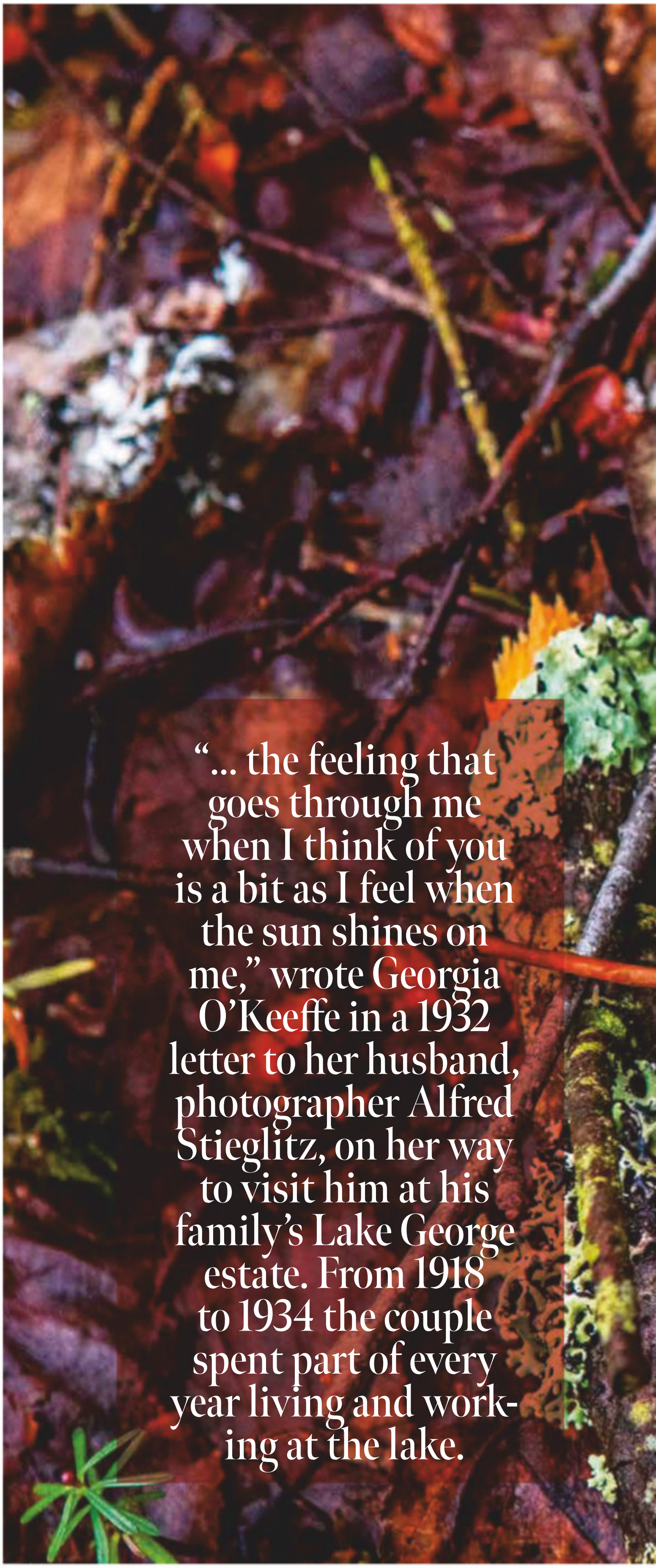
In the spring of 2001, I escaped New York City for a small town in the Adirondacks. I'd been a paramedic for 12 years in the city, and I wanted to get as far from those streets as I could. Moving to North Creek was like moving to Fiji. But on the morning of September 11, I watched the planes hit the World Trade Center. I got that familiar feeling in my chest, the way I used to after a terrible ambulance call, squeezed with dread. The next day I joined the Johnsburg Emergency Squad.

I soon discovered that to be a paramedic in Johnsburg means frequent calls to Gore. Every weekend we'd back our ambulance to the doors of Base First Aid and load them in. The nurse at the Base was Ellen Eager, a former RN from Brooklyn who terrified the local paramedics. She was an excellent nurse and protected her patients ferociously. I understood Ellen—I grew up with Brooklyn nurs-

| *Continued on page 48*

Hearts
in the
Park

Around here there's
love
every which way



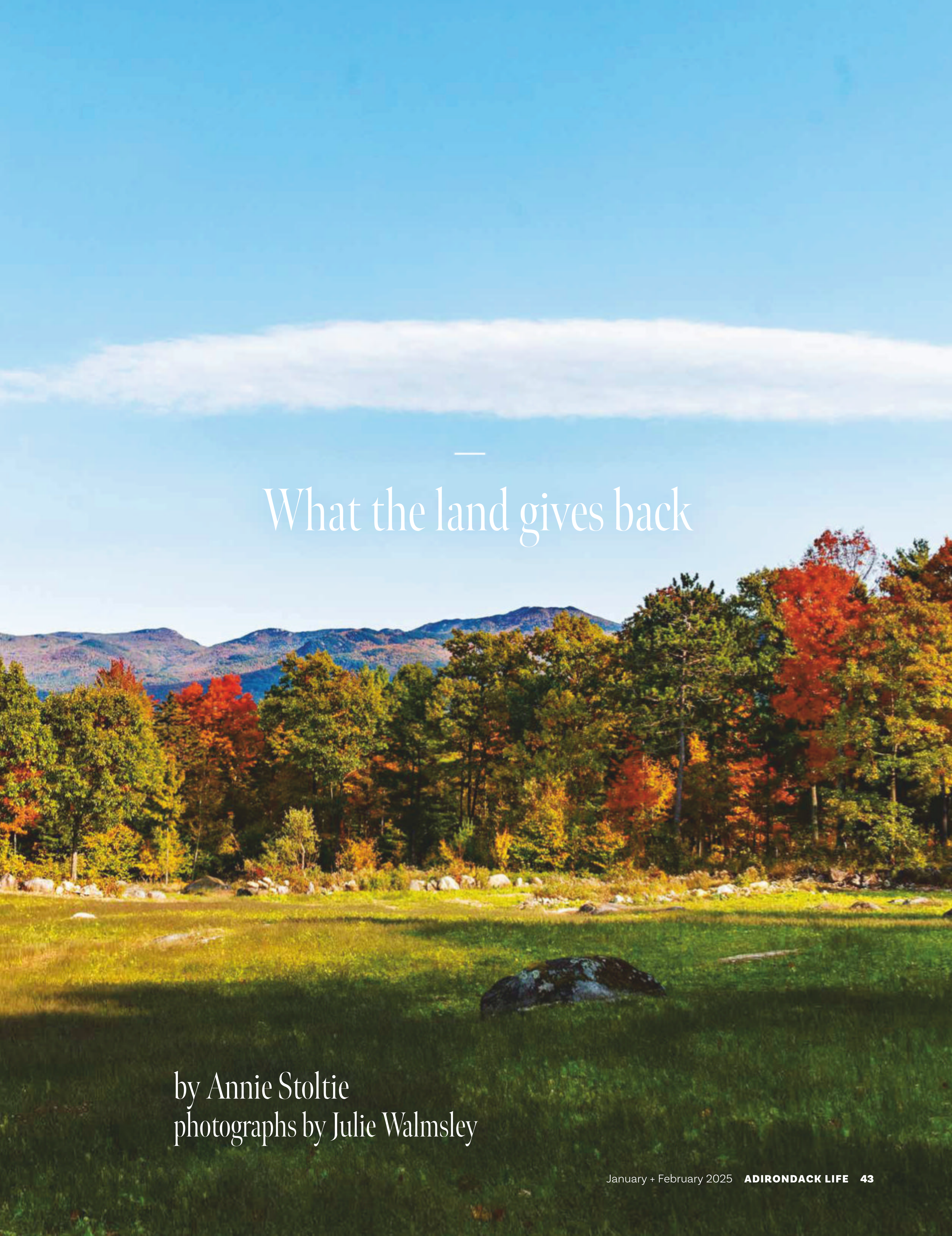
"... the feeling that goes through me when I think of you is a bit as I feel when the sun shines on me," wrote Georgia O'Keeffe in a 1932 letter to her husband, photographer Alfred Stieglitz, on her way to visit him at his family's Lake George estate. From 1918 to 1934 the couple spent part of every year living and working at the lake.

photographs by
Nancie Battaglia

"Somehow it doesn't seem fair for two people to have all that we have in our lives of beauty and love," wrote Faith Weston, of her time in the High Peaks with her husband, Harold, one of the foremost Adirondack painters of the 20th century.

Eagle Island, Upper Saranac Lake. TOP: **Wright Peak.** FACING PAGE: **Along the Black Mountain trail, east side of Lake George.** PAGE 39: **Klondike Notch trail.**

Gifted



What the land gives back

by Annie Stoltie

photographs by Julie Walmsley

STORIES ABOUT SETTLING DOWN IN THE ADIRONDACKS usually involve love of the land. Jamie Meunier's is no exception. His parents, Joe and Evelyn, first bought their 100-plus acres in Wilmington in 1970. At camp "Joeslyn," as they called it, the Meuniers' base was a 1920s shoebox-size cabin. From there they could set their 11 kids free to explore and hunt and do all the wild things they couldn't at home in Pawling, about a four-hour drive downstate.

It was an all-season playground. In winter the family rode snowmobiles to reach the cabin, perched on a hill facing the Jay Range and Ebenezer and Winch Mountains. No snow meant dirt bikes—Evelyn and Joe on 125s, the rest of the kids first on 50s, then bigger engines as they grew. Evelyn would scout the property, relay what she found and send the kids to clear trails, often old logging roads. Every path cleared was named after the sibling who'd done the work—Leon's Trail, Roland's Trail, Adrian's Trail. A map was never made, but each member of the family memorized the network.

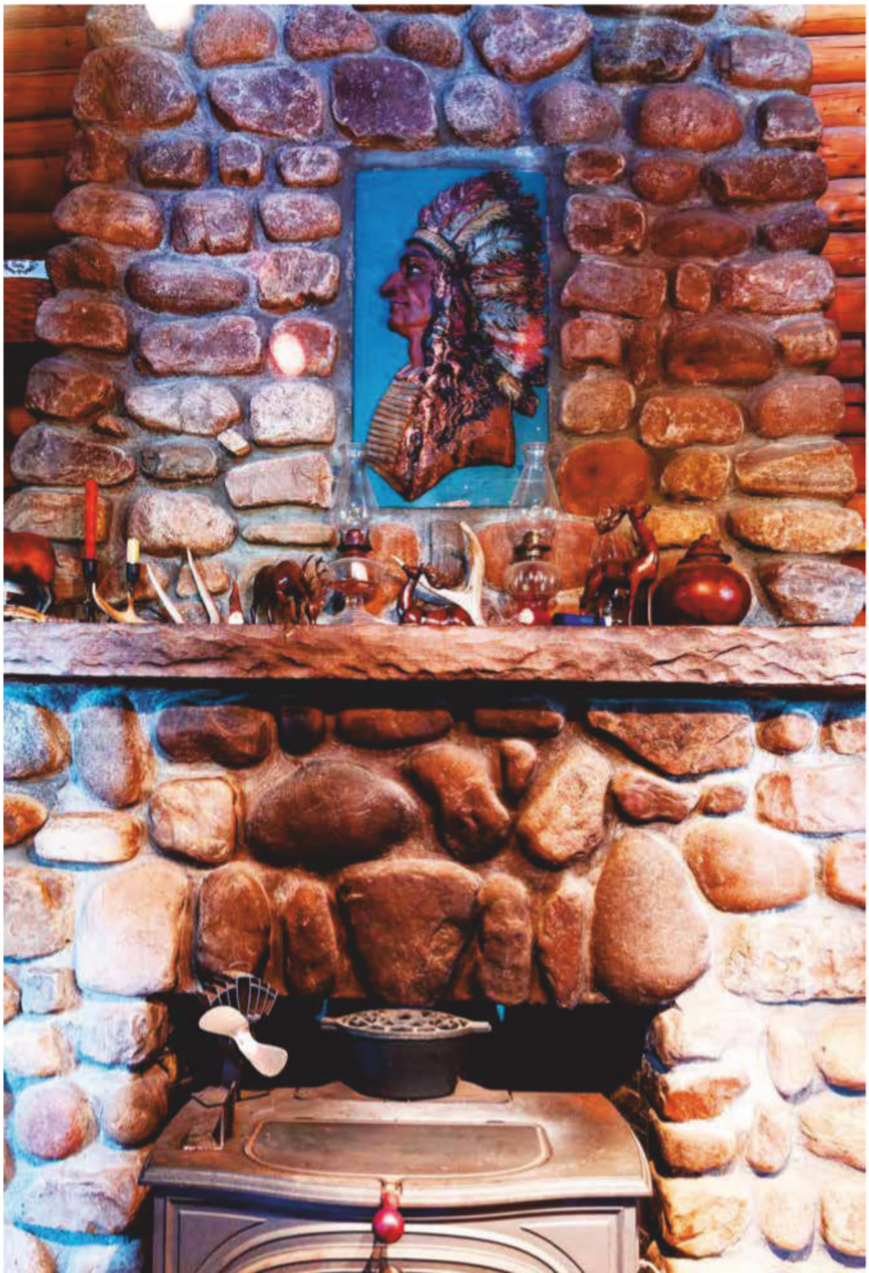
The cabin, back then enveloped by trees, was crowded and noisy. Kids slept on mattresses around the fireplace while Joe and Evelyn had a cramped loft above the kitchen. Times when Joe wasn't there, Evelyn would climb the ladder and, with a basket, pulley and rope, the older siblings would help bring the babies up to their mom, where she kept a crib. Jamie remembers seeing sky through the ceiling's rafters. Some mornings the kids awoke to snow on their blankets.

The Meuniers were told the cabin was built by the Potters—a name ubiquitous in these parts—as an outpost where woodsmen could get their supplies. In those days this land was cleared to the soil for farming; rock walls and barbed wire still snake through the property. The remnants of what might have been a homestead, outlined by apple trees and lilac bushes, was discovered below the cabin.

Ralph Bierce, also of Pawling, had purchased the place in the 1950s. Joe and Evelyn bought it

Jamie Meunier and his mom, Evelyn, at camp "Joeslyn," in Wilmington. Built as a sportsmen's outpost in the 1920s, from 1970 on, the cabin and surrounding 120-plus acres served as a playground for Jamie and his 10 siblings. FACING PAGE, TOP: **Inside Jamie's woodshop.**

The cabin, built in the 1920s, was an outpost where woodsmen could get their supplies. In those days this land was cleared to the soil for farming; rock walls and barbed wire still snake through the property.



after Bierce dropped dead from a heart attack in the cabin's driveway. And then in 2004, Jamie, the youngest Meunier, bought it from his mom—Joe had passed away in 1996.

Jamie, a master woodworker, moved here permanently. With logs milled from the property he built a soaring woodshop at the base of the hill. From there he crafted custom projects for clients, but also improved the cabin. He set to work on the land, adding 150 or so acres, clearing trees to open the cabin's view and maintaining trails for him, family and friends, and moose, deer, bears, bobcats, fishers and other wildlife.

Of course this place means everything to Jamie. There's muscle memory of all those trails named after brothers and sisters. It's where he took his biggest buck. It's backdrop for adventures with cousins and friends, plus nieces and nephews and their children who still visit. It's private—neighbors are a good distance away. And it's stunningly beautiful.

You could say he loves this land.

But you could also say that this land has loved him back.

Almost 25 years ago Jamie was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, a chronic autoimmune disease that affects the nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord.

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: **Cheryl Tanner. Outside and inside Jamie's handcrafted rental cottage. The couple's pup Ruby. Snapshots of the Meuniers and friends hunting the land, as they continue to do today.**

As the disease has progressed, limiting his mobility, it's his life here, where he's inspired to walk, build and hunt, that has kept him going, says his life partner Cheryl Tanner.

Cheryl and Jamie have known each other since high school. But it wasn't until she moved to Saratoga Springs to take care of her parents that she reconnected with him. (For more than a decade before that Cheryl was personal assistant to the legendary actor James Earl Jones, who had an estate in Pawling. Jamie also worked for Jones, building custom cabinets and other projects.) They began dating in 2017 and Cheryl soon moved to Wilmington, though she still travels to Saratoga for her job at the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation, an organization that gives sanctuary to horses after they retire from racing.

And now, from the cabin's deck, you can see a wall of mountains. The couple sits at a table and their dogs—Nikki, Ruby and Dolly—sprawl nearby. (Out back are their chickens Snoopy, Charlie, Linus and Lucy.) Jamie says he's tired all the time and feels like he's dragging, but there's always something to do—cutting lumber, blowing leaves, moving a pile of dirt before it turns to mud. There's also the cottage he designed and built with his nephew Troy a few years ago. It sits far below the cabin, near the road, and is popular among renters and family and friends. Jamie stays active and has daily goals, not just for his body but for his mind. He says it's always been like that.

Jamie's challenged by his body but, Cheryl says, is living his best life, and in a place that feels like a postcard. She calls him an inspiration, a mentor, an amazing man whose love of nature and perseverance has kept him alive.

Jamie says he's looking to the future and will continue to do what he can. If the day should come that he can no longer walk, the only place he wants to be is in front of the fireplace in the cabin.

It's Jamie's life here, where he's inspired to walk, build and hunt, that has kept him going. He stays active and has daily goals, not just for his body but for his mind. He says it's always been like that.

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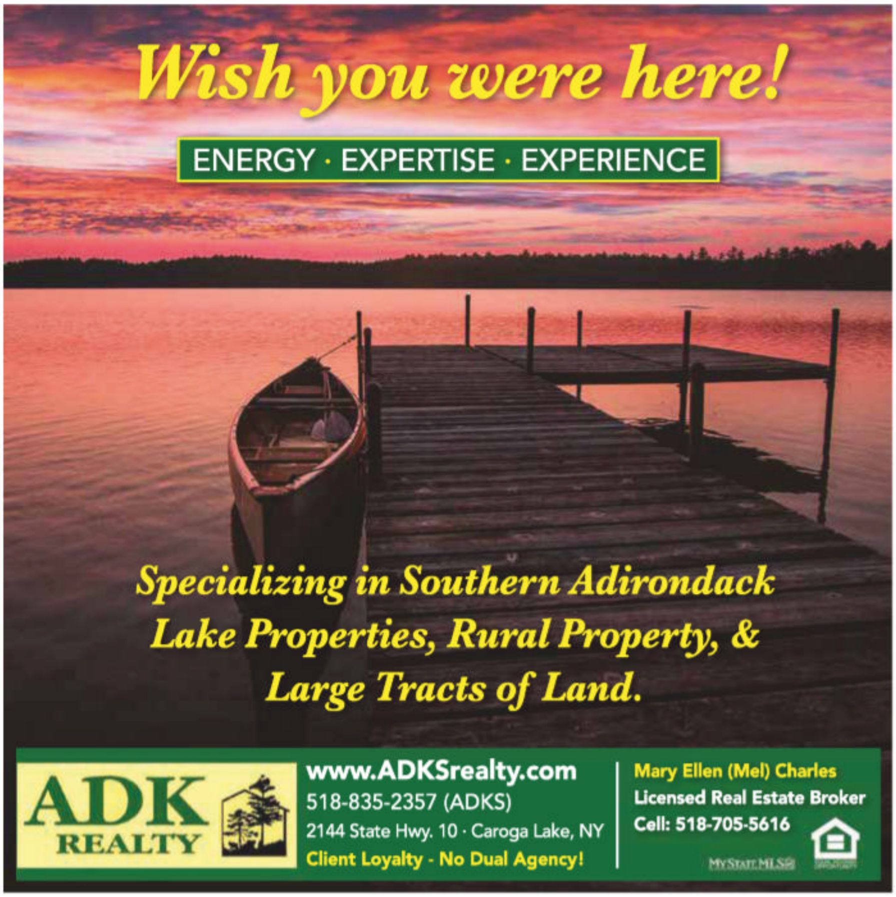
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LEARNING HOW TO FALL

Continued from page 37

es. What I did not understand was the man who was often standing next to Ellen—tall and thin, with a polo shirt and fiery bandanna, like a preppy pirate. He spoke theatrically about the most random things. We'd be setting someone's ankle and he'd tell me about bodies in the Ganges, or the red light districts of Amsterdam. "Who is that guy?" I asked my driver, who knew everyone. "That's Bean Dip," my driver said, "he's the patrol director."

I'd skied only six times in my life, and never at Gore, but after taking care of enough injuries at the Base I decided it was time to see for myself what all the trauma was about. I got off the top of the lift and there was Bean Dip, aka Mark Anderson, leaning out the window of a small cabin with a sign that said Saddle Ski Patrol. He was shouting into a megaphone, words I couldn't hear. Other patrollers sat outside in the sun, leaning back on crooked dining room chairs. Beanie saw me and waved me over, showing me what he was reading: Mao's *Little Red Book*. This is all you need to know, he said, and then went back to shouting in the megaphone. I fell on nearly every trail that day and had so much fun that a week later I was in line at the ticket booth, waiting to buy a pass for my family. There was Bean Dip again, running up to me as if I was injured.

"What are you doing here?" he said. "You're a paramedic, you don't pay."

"But I need passes for my kids too."

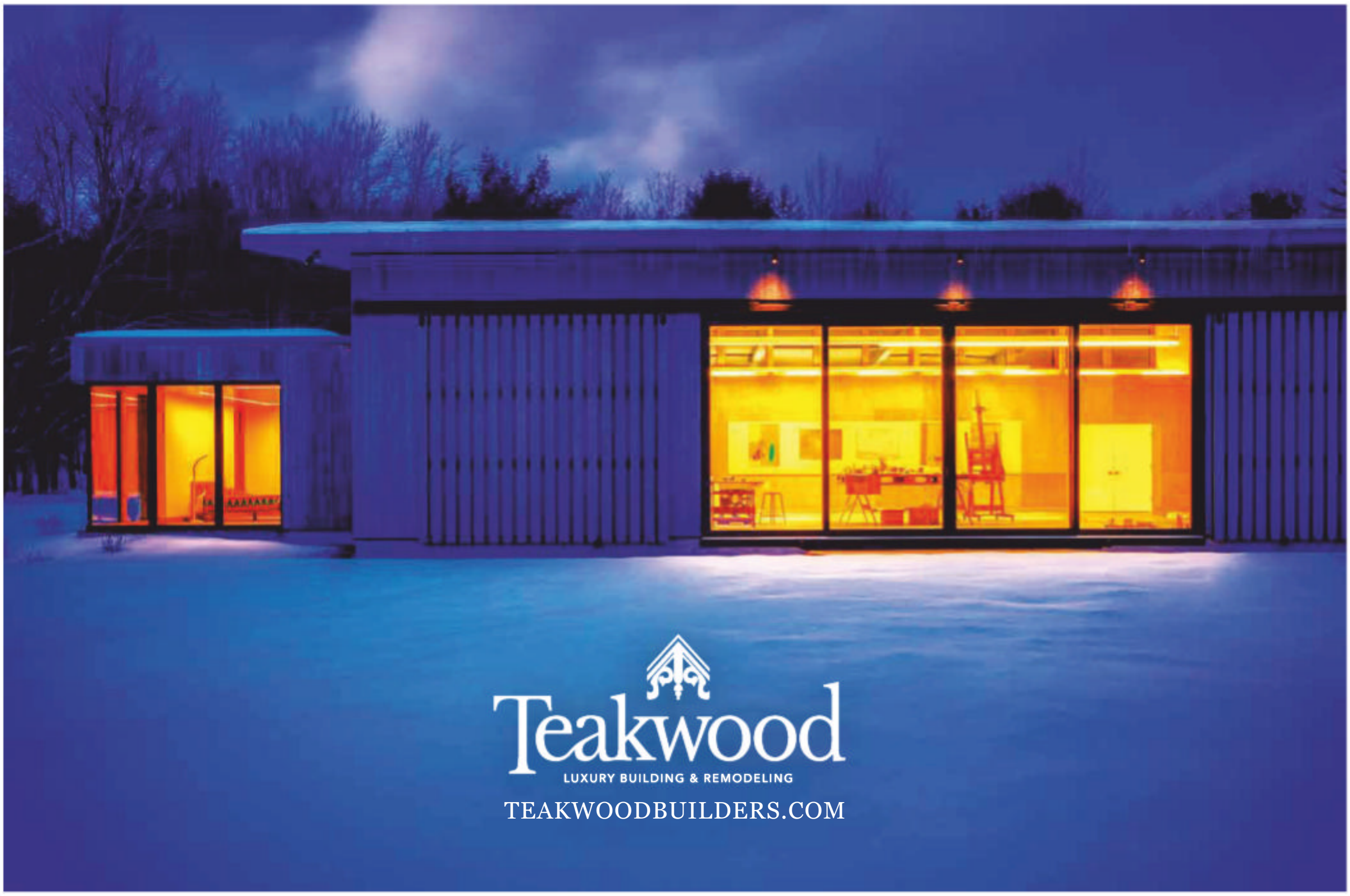
He thought for a moment. "I tell you what," he said. "We'll put you on ski patrol."

"But I can't ski."

"We'll teach you," he said.

The following Monday I signed a few forms and was given a red jacket with a white cross on the back and stains on the sleeves that might have been blood. Bean Dip told me I was to give first aid where needed, but never should I ski down with a sled. He put me on the gondola and told me to report to Bear Patrol and see Davey Dog. (Back then there were three patrol stations, each on different parts of the mountain.)

The Bear Mountain ski-patrol station was a dilapidated trailer with five men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sitting around a table. When I told them Bean Dip had hired me, they grew suspicious, and when they found out I'd skied only seven times in my life they shook their heads in dismay. I felt bad for them. These were serious people, engineers and contractors. I tried to tell them what Beanie had told me, that he was hiring a team of medical experts, that it would be the best team in the country. Davey Dog told me to report to Saddle Patrol.

I quickly discovered that the ski patrol at Gore was divided into two factions. There was Davey Dog and those men I'd seen at Bear, men who loved to ski but believed in boundaries. And then there was Bean Dip's group, who Davey Dog called The Stooges, who had no boundaries. I didn't want to be a Stooge. It was bad enough that I couldn't ski.

But Beanie was always requesting me to help him with his "special projects." "Send me Connelly," he would say, and I'd get up from my chair at Bear, put on my patrol jacket and first-aid pack and head out the door. "Good luck with that," Davey Dog would say. These projects might begin as routine chores, like raising tower pads or marking hazards, but pretty soon we'd be skiing in areas where I wasn't supposed to be, in pursuit of things we rarely attained. Typical missions might take hours, and when Bean Dip wasn't spreading his merry mayhem to the public, he was regaling me with stories of growing up in foreign cities, the son of a CIA agent. His time in India, in particular, was the source of many adventures, with at least one international incident that required rescue by the Air Force.

At the end of our forays he'd burst into the patrol hut and send everyone out on chores. Then he'd lean back in the dispatcher's chair and turn up the music. In my memory it's always The Doors.

A month after I started working at Gore, I called Bear on the radio, asking them to send me a caution sign for Quicksilver Trail. What I got in reply was Davey Dog's near perfect imitation of Curly Howard's laugh, made famous on *The Three Stooges* shorts. I was officially a Stooge. Beanie said it was time for my graduation and he and his Stooge lieu-

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tenant Geoff Merrett led me to the summit. We took off our skis on the Upper Steilhang Trail and hiked through the snow to the fire tower. The final step of my patrol orientation was to climb to the top.

The steps were covered in an inch of glare ice, the railings too. On the top floor the roof was gone and I climbed onto the slick table and stood and raised my arms and head into the wind, higher than anything around me. Far below me I heard Beanie's voice shouting up, "I gave you a job on top of the world."

The men of Bear were serious about all aspects of patrol, but especially when it came to catching poachers—people skiing closed trails. They considered the Stooges to be very lazy in this area. One day in February, Beanie determined that we needed to make an example of someone. "We need justice," he said, "but it must be fair." He cleared out Saddle Patrol and announced the Gore court in session. He sat in his judge's seat. "Bailiff," he yelled, "bring in the accused." Geoff Merrett led a trembling teenager into the room. He sat the boy on the stand and had him read the oath. I was the appointed defense attorney for the case, and I did my best with the evidence given. It didn't matter. The verdict was guilty. In a long and meandering judgment, Beanie told the young man that once we start allowing skiers to duck ropes the next thing you know we're no different than Hunter Mountain, where they have regular knife fights and shootouts. He finished by giving the teenager a stern warning never to visit this court again, and sent him back out to ski.

Beanie had made it seem like hiring patrollers who couldn't ski was unusual. The truth was, it had been done once before, in 1976, when Beanie himself was hired. "I tell you what," was how Beanie began every story, "just got out of college and was seeing this divorcée in North Creek who didn't want me to take that job at the Singer Factory. She said I should join the patrol at Gore, that all I needed was a letter from a state official. Bob Kahn was the patrol director then, he didn't want to hire me, I didn't know

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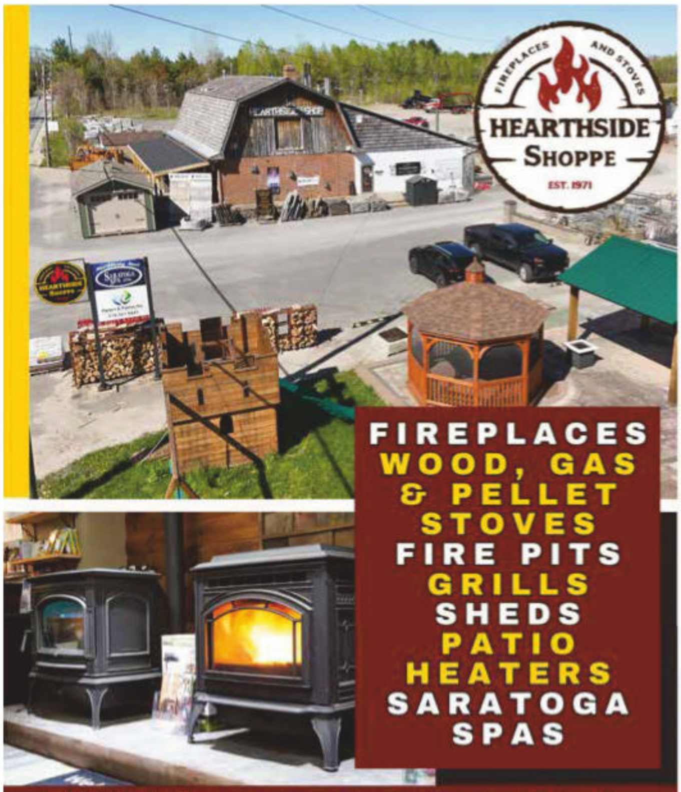

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how to ski, but his hands were tied: I had a letter from Patrick Moynihan, the US senator whose daughter I used to hang out with when I lived in New Delhi."

Some patrollers tried to teach me to ski, others completely avoided me. Once, without thinking, Beanie asked Rick Beardsley to give me a lesson. Beardsley was a Stooge who only skied in the woods, usually on streambeds and off boulders. You'd see him walking along roadsides, skis in hand, beard jutted with branches. "Come inside," Beardsley smiled, and vanished into the woods. Before I could follow, I heard Beanie yelling behind me, "Stop! Stop! You can't go in there. You'll be killed!"

One morning Beanie called for me to meet him on the Rumor Trail, arguably the steepest in the East. I found him waiting for me at the top. "It's just been groomed," he said. "You won't have another chance like this. Let's go." He disappeared over the edge. I tried to follow his path and began falling almost immediately, pinwheeling for what must have been a hundred yards. Beanie skied up to me. "Spectacular," he said. "Let's try something else."

Despite my skiing disabilities, I brought other skills to the job. I'd been a paramedic in midtown Manhattan for 12 years and I was used to taking care of people in strange places. To me the Sunway Trail on a busy Saturday was just a tilted and slippery 42nd Street. Even those patrollers who wouldn't want to be seen skiing with me got used to calling me for the emergencies.

Beanie ran many of those accidents with me. He was the most chaotic person I've ever met, but in a crisis, he became the calmest person. It was as if all the craziness he brought into this crazy business—hoisting people up thousands of feet to send them hurtling down on thin sticks—was just a kind of practicing, preparing for when he had to take charge and make quick and vital decisions, which he did many times a day, and he was really good at it.

That year the patrol banquet, a fancy dinner for the patrollers and their families, was held at the Glens Falls Country Club. Awards were handed out, speeches were made. I was given the Faceplant of the Year award for my fall on Rumor. I thanked everyone for putting up with my terrible skiing. "I can't ski," I said, "but I can fall."

The final day of the season took place on Easter Sunday. At Gore there's a sunrise service and then an Easter Egg Hunt. Kids gather at the base of the mountain and await the Egg Man to ski down and start the hunt. I brought my two boys, then three and five years old. "We're waiting for the Egg Man," announced Gore's marketing director, Emily Stanton, who wore a rabbit costume and skipped through the crowd. "And here he comes!" My boys and I looked up to see Bean Dip skiing toward us, the top half of his head shrouded in a sinister looking eggshell, cracked at the base, with two tiny holes dug out for eyes. He took off his skis and prowled through the mass of seated children. I looked at the faces of the parents, a mix of bewilderment and terror. The kids loved him.

Today the Egg Man is retired. He spends much of his time at his cabin in Blue Mountain Lake, a skull and crossbones marking the entrance. Davey Dog is long gone and so are the Stooges. No more kangaroo courts or fire-tower initiations. No more blasting "Light My Fire" or Faceplant of the Year awards. That winter, some 20 years ago, feels like it happened someplace else. These days Gore Mountain Ski Patrol is a respectable and professional group. I work beside lawyers and doctors, contractors and engineers, some of the best and most competent people I know.

I'm a much better skier now. I love being the first one to the summit. Some mornings there's a layer of clouds below me, with just the islands of the surrounding peaks poking through. When the skiers come, they quickly ski off any fresh snow and the middles of the trails turn slick. But there's usually some snow to be found on the sides, and that's where I go, skiing right to the edge and back, to the edge and back.

Joe Connelly's first novel *Bringing out the Dead* was made into a film starring Nicolas Cage, directed by Martin Scorsese.

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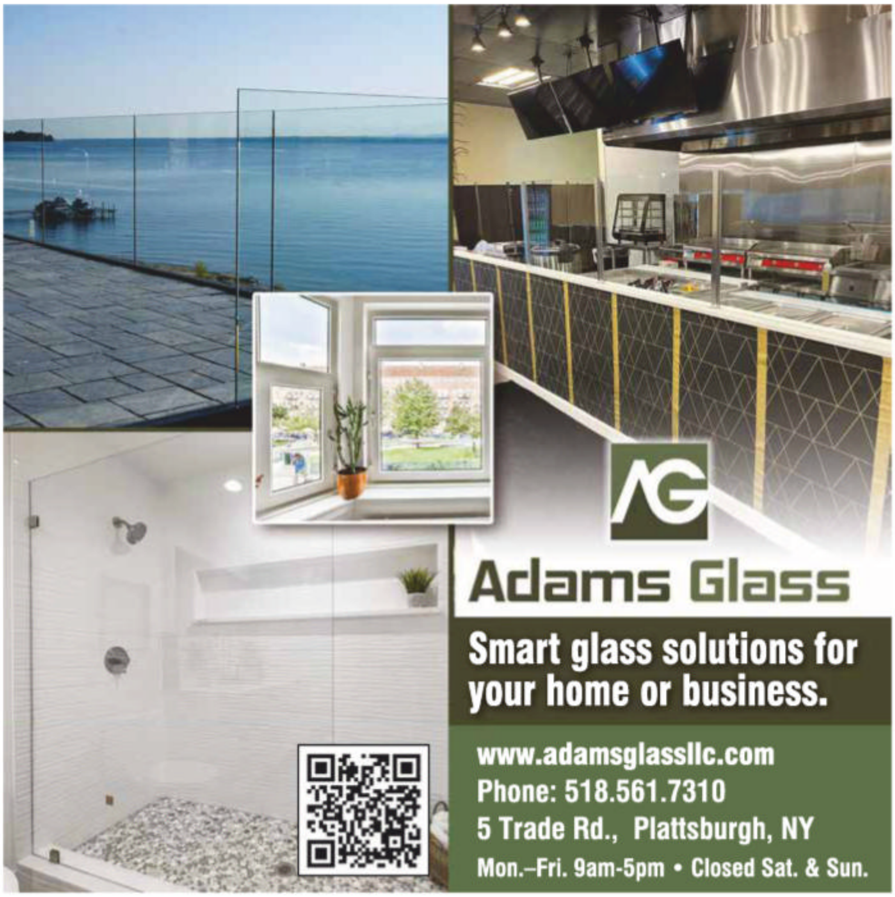
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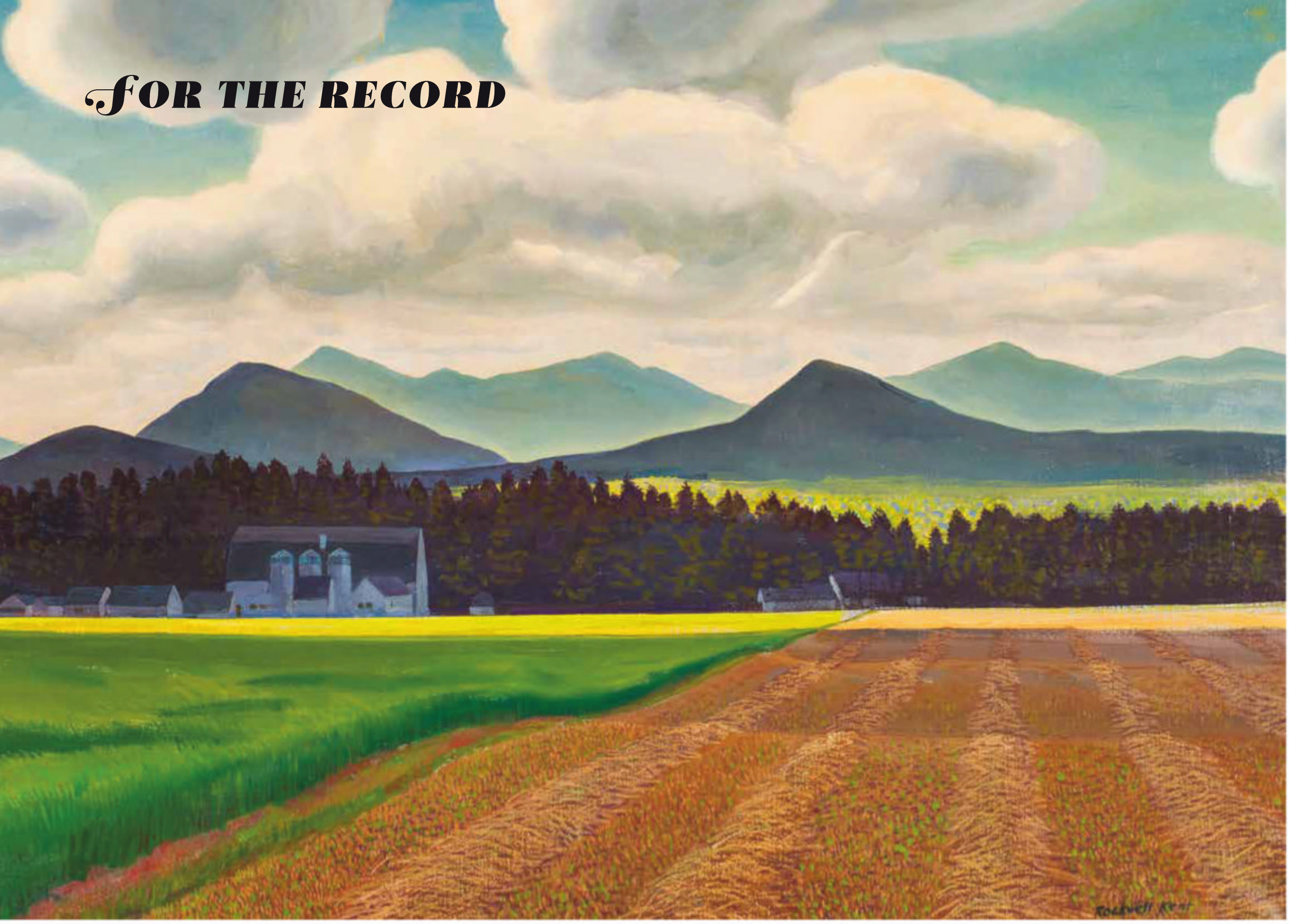

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War on Whiteface

How Rockwell Kent helped save the Adirondack skyline

BY TIM ROWLAND

Whiteface and other High Peaks in the background of Kent's Au Sable Forks spread in *Untitled: Asgaard Farm*, 1961.

A decade after America's triumph in World War I, a grateful public was still casting about for ways to honor its heroic Doughboys for making the world safe for democracy. Statuary of Brodie-helmeted infantrymen could be found in parks from sea to shining sea, obelisks and arches rose to the skies and names were etched upon tablets of stone.

The Adirondack Park did not escape the monumental fervor, even though the idea behind the Forest Preserve was to protect the woods from any manmade intrusions. What was the park if not an ode to untrammeled tranquility, and what was war if not the antithesis of such an ideal?

Yet the war gave currency to an idea that had been kicking around for some while. In the decades bookending the turn of the 20th century, a Saranac Lake merchant named Marcellus Leonard had been rattling through the backcountry in his wagon, delivering pots and pans, salt, sewing machines and housewares to a generation of women who had no idea they were witnessing a crude prototype of Amazon Prime.

As Leonard trundled about the base of Whiteface Mountain, he had plenty of time to think, and his thoughts meandered up the contours of the massif's flanks to the tip of its summit. As horse-drawn wagons gave way to the internal combustion engine, Leonard saw no reason why a road couldn't be cut, similar to the new auto route up Pikes Peak.

Other people saw lots of reasons, cost being one, crazy-steep terrain being another, and a growing Adirondack ethos of natural preservation being a third. It seems unlikely the idea for a Whiteface highway would have gone anywhere without the residual fervor of the Great War—and the growing realization that motorcars might open the spectacular Adirondack scenery to the touring public.

In a lightning flash, doubters became cheerleaders, and practical, unsentimental men of business wiped away tears at the notion, the necessity of remembering those who had so selflessly given their lives for their country. What better way to honor these soldiers than with a tourist attraction they could call their own? So, almost exactly 100 years ago, the Chamber of Commerce joined with the American Legion calling for a Whiteface highway in honor of the state's hospitality industry, er, the heroes of the Great War.

Conservation groups blanched, but their concerns were washed away on a wave of patriotism. Anticipation of the project grew, and in 1928 an impatient state assemblyman from Crown Point, Fred Porter, demanded a meeting with Governor Al Smith, urging his administration to get moving with a survey for the new route. "Mr. Porter, like everyone else in the Adirondacks, is anxious to see the work started," reported the *Adirondack Record*.

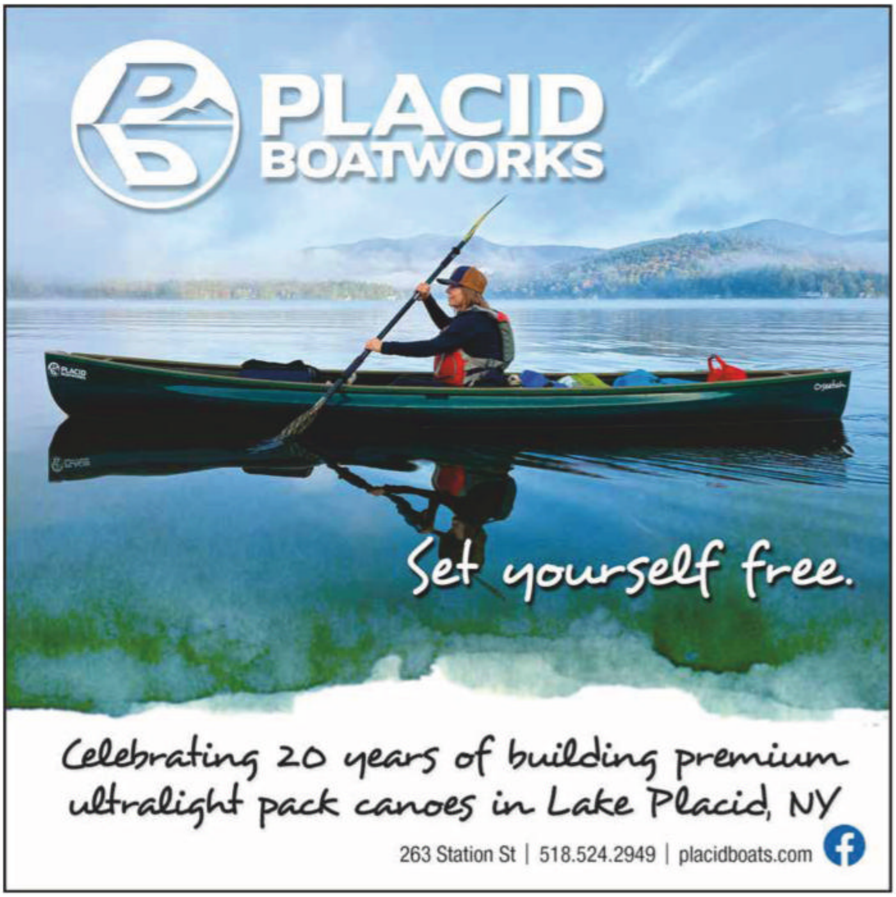
Well, not everyone.

That same year, the Adirondacks gained a new resident, the artist Rockwell Kent, whose quest for stark, unblemished landscapes had lured him to Alaska, Newfoundland and Tierra del Fuego. At first sight of the mountain ranges framing his new Asgaard Farm in Au Sable Forks, Kent recalled in one of his autobiographies, "It was as if we had never seen the mountains before."

Kent made more than 60 studies of Whiteface—any assault on this panorama would be viewed as a personal and aesthetic affront.

Today mighty Whiteface maintains its towering dignity despite having been gutted and filleted by ski trails, roads, trams, utility lines, hot-dog vendors, observatories and an elevator to the top.

But for all that, it could have been worse. Whiteface came within one final sign-off of being lit up to the heavens with a torch stronger than any man-made light source to come before, a blaze so bright it would be visible in three states and two nations.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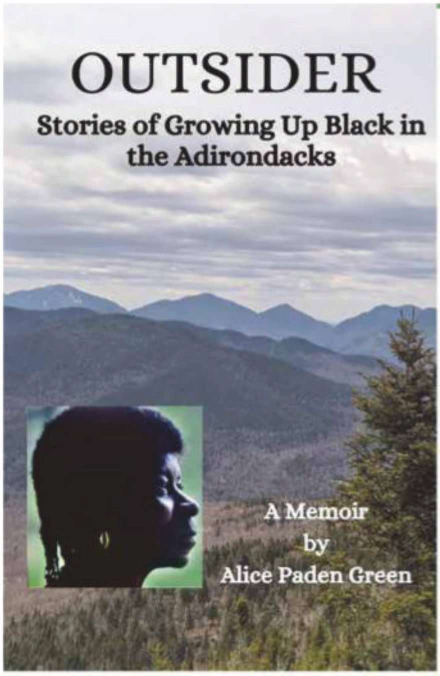
OUTSIDER

Stories of Growing Up Black in the Adirondacks

A Memoir by Alice Paden Green

Witherbee is a hamlet in the Adirondack Park in New York State and the place where author Alice Paden Green learned a harsh reality about race, growing up Black in a predominantly white area. ***"Outsider: Stories of Growing Up Black in the Adirondacks"*** details many of Green's experiences as her family grappled with poverty, race and acceptance in the mid-20th century. This memoir, prompted by a recent gathering of Blacks and whites in the Adirondacks for a discussion on race relations, explores perceptions of Black families in the 1950s and '60s and whether Blacks are still viewed as outsiders or welcomed with open arms in this four-season, recreational playground still dominated by white residents. This book adds to the narrative on whether more work should be done to diversify the Adirondack regions and can be used by individuals, groups, and government agencies to further those discussions.

About the Author – Alice Paden Green is the executive director of the Center for Law and Justice, a civil rights organization she founded in 1985 in Albany, New York. For nearly 40 years, the Center has been the foremost change agent in working to transform policies, practices and people in the areas of social justice, criminal justice and prison reform.

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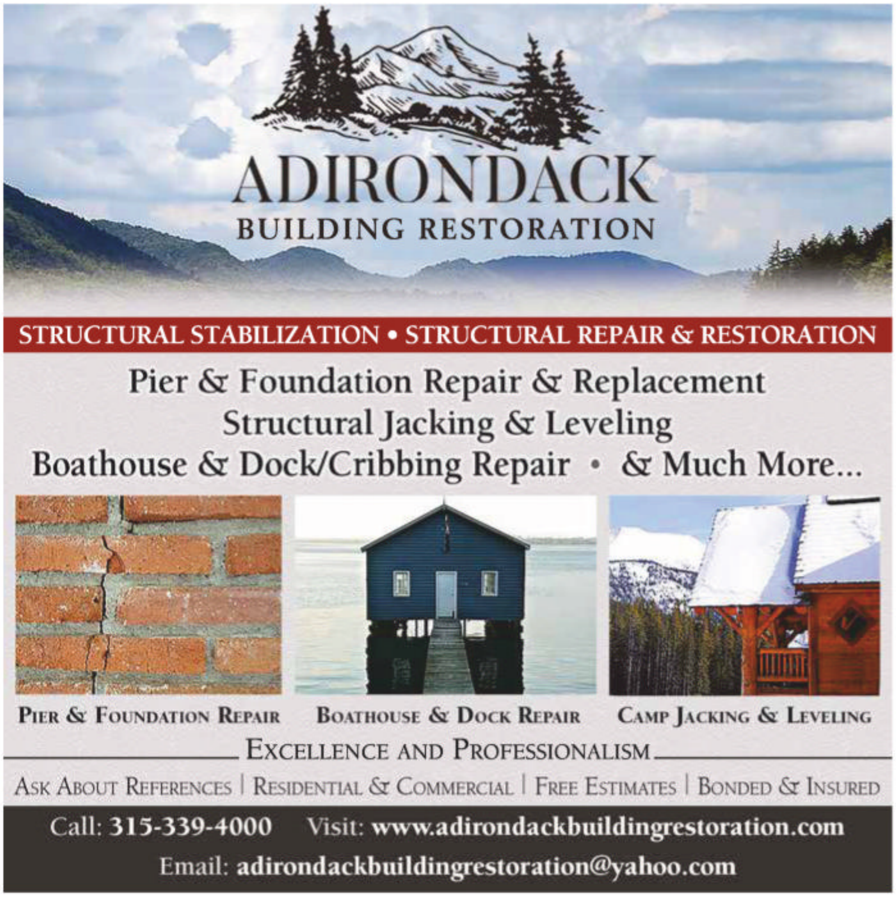
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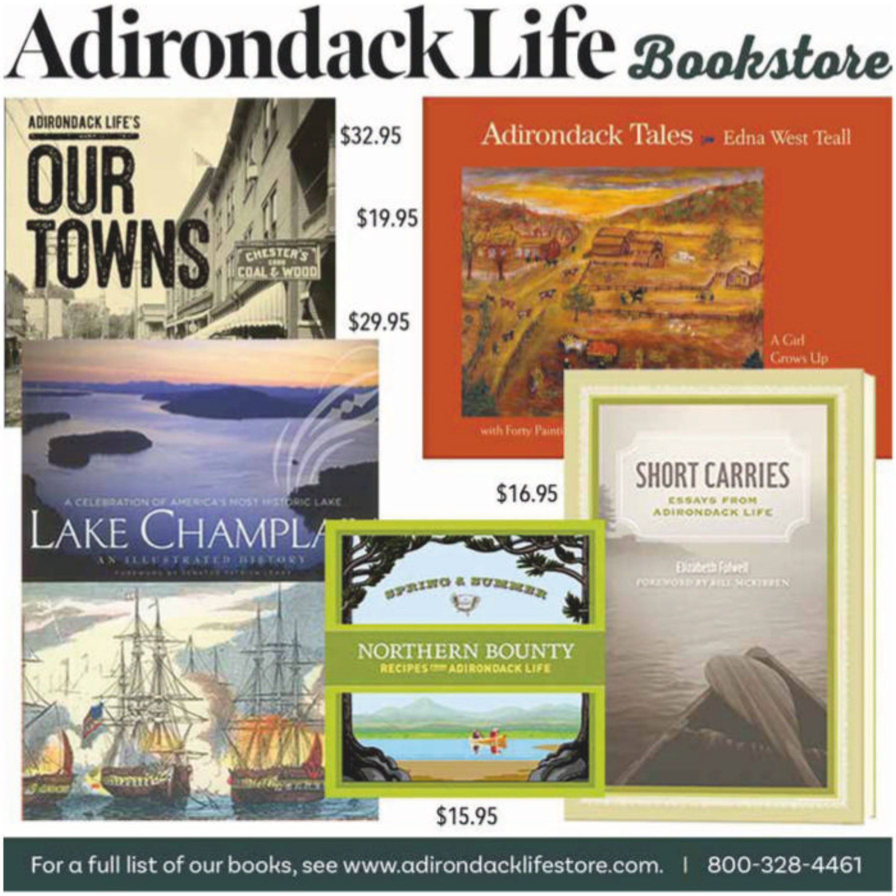
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FOREWORD BY BILL MCKIBBEN

Emboldened engineers held nothing back. Those from General Electric laboratories at Schenectady proposed, on a 40-foot tower, a blinding light with 48 hot cathodes, 12 to each of the four sides of the tower, three feet in height. Atop that would be a directional light pointing pilots to the Lake Placid airport, and atop that (why not?) would be a five-foot revolving beacon.

"This ring of neon lights will form the eternal lights for the memorial to the men and women of New York State who gave their lives in the worldwide struggle for democracy," pronounced the *Adirondack Record-Post*.

Conservation groups, from garden clubs to the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks, were aghast. Some had bitten their tongues during the highway debate for fear of besmirching the veterans, but this pulsating discotheque atop such a natural wonder was all too much.

The Legionnaires continued to insist that nothing was too good, or too extravagant, for "our boys." They were joined by the local commercial establishment, along with state senators and assembly members who approved the lighthouse overwhelmingly. The administration of Governor Herbert Lehman was divided, with the Public Works and Conservation Commission taking opposing sides.

Kent, who never held his tongue about anything, let loose in a 1934 letter to *The New York Times* that today stands as one of the epic pieces of literature in the Adirondack canon. He began calmly enough, establishing artists as the repository for public thought and emotion. "The artist," he wrote, "is the spokesman for mankind."

As he waxes poetic on the mountain's physical and spiritual qualities, his words gain momentum until he's writing, as Mark Twain would have it, with a pen warmed up in hell.

"All that which has so moved us in the past and can so move mankind forever is threatened now. Fools want to stick a lighthouse on top of it—to glorify our boys! God's mountain isn't high enough; we'll make it higher. We'll put a light there to outshine the stars. Just so might a flea perched on the pinnacle of a man's bald head cry out that he is taller than the man. … To put a dead thing on a living mountain—to kill a mountain to commemorate death." Kent went on to suggest that a better way to honor our soldiers was to wipe all development from Whiteface in their name.

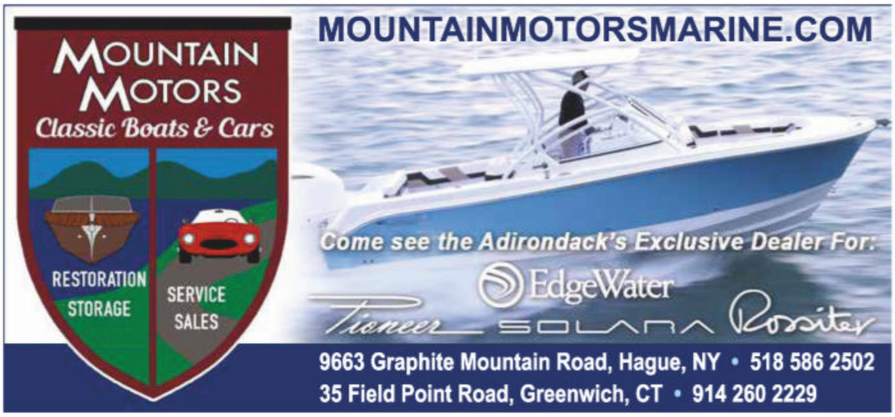
Nor did he stop with the popular press. Kent turned his house into a business office, drafting letters to "governors, clergymen, bankers and bootleggers." At his behest, the American Institute of Architects registered their strong disapproval. Big metropolitan papers came out in opposition, and even the occasional local paper, one arguing that the monument was "not one to honor the dead, but to enrich the living profiteers."

In 1934, the great artist's reputation and his left-leaning politics had yet to be tarnished by the disgrace of the Red Scare. By the 1950s, when Kent was with equal vigor opposing Whiteface ski trails, his critics in general and newspaper editors in particular were hostile and snide. But at the time Governor Lehman was weighing his options, Kent's opinions were treated with respect, even by those who disagreed. He was, after all, a celebrity, in a region that had precious few.

Whether it was Kent, the conservation groups, members of his own administration or someone else, Lehman came down on the side of Whiteface, in verbiage that sounded suspiciously familiar:

"The construction of this tower would disfigure the natural beauty of Whiteface Mountain," he wrote in his veto message. "It would mar its nobility and grandeur. The mountain's wilderness should be preserved. While I am generally most sympathetic with memorials to our veterans, I believe that it would be singularly inappropriate to bear evidence of their courage, sacrifice and service by the erection of a high tower at the top of Whiteface Mountain."

The ring of commercial conspirators was beaten, Kent wrote with satisfaction, "but it had taken a mountain to do it."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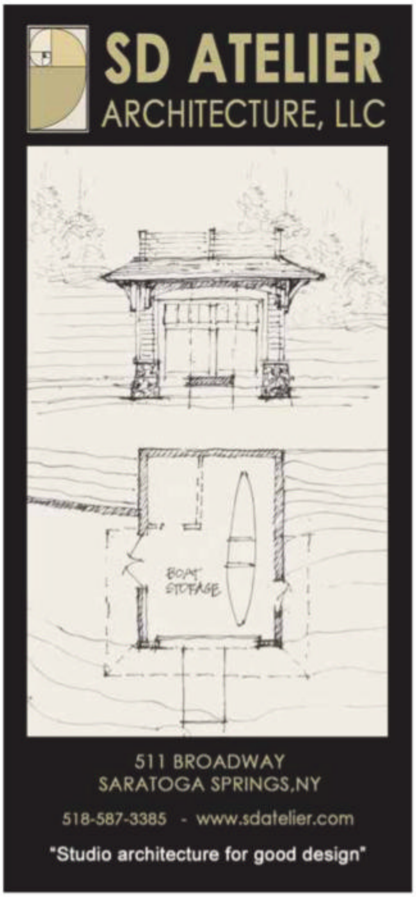
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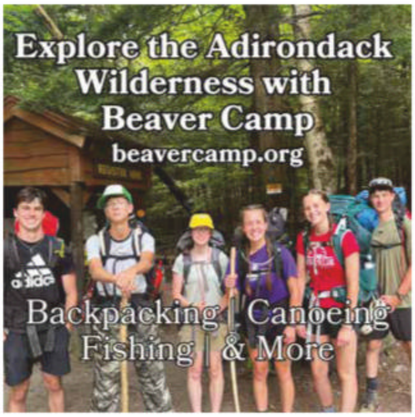
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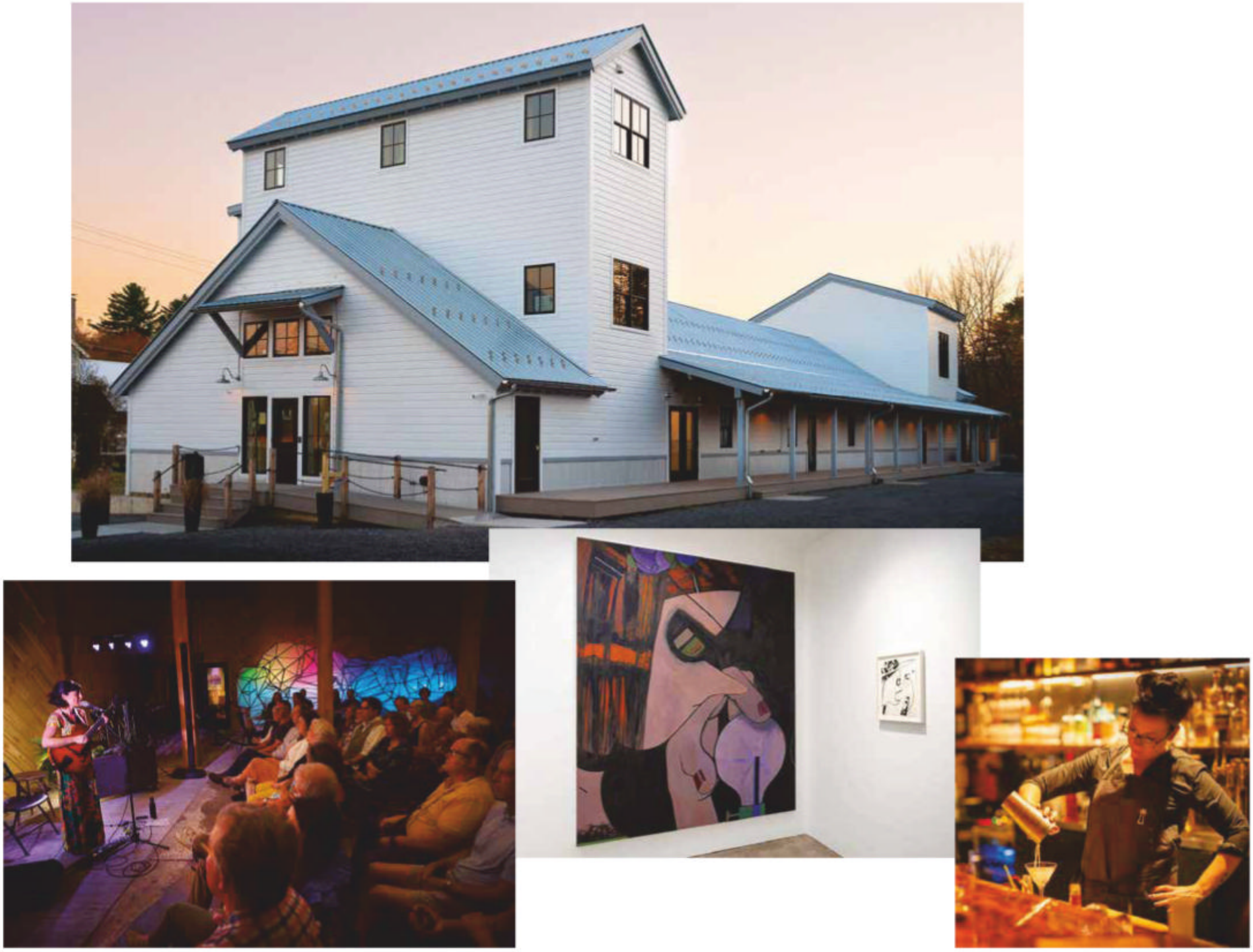

The Mill

An abandoned building gets a creative makeover

BY NIKI KOUROFSKY

In Westport, a new cultural hub has become a destination for innovative music, art, food and drink.

As an entryway piece it's stunning: a massive, rotating millstone dangling from the ceiling, made of foam but looking as if its weight could stop Wile E. Coyote in his tracks. The sculpture, *A Stone Alone*, greets visitors to The Mill, a former grain mill that's been transformed into an arts center with galleries, a performance space and a speakeasy that slings craft cocktails and small plates.

The sculpture is an immediate reminder of the building's history—it originally opened in 1952 as the Champlain Valley Seed Cooperative—but there's a dissonance in the symbolism of the solitary millstone, a tool uncoupled from the partner that gave it purpose. It strikes an unexpected note in a space dedicated to community engagement.

But dissonance might be the point. The unexpected can offer an opening for exploration and experiment. It's a hallmark of jazz and a playground

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN STECHSCHULTE

for The Mill's cofounder, Grammy-winning trumpeter and composer Taylor Haskins.

Taylor studied at the Manhattan School of Music under Lew Soloff—best known as a trumpeter for Blood, Sweat and Tears—and was mentored by Clark Terry, a National Endowment of the Arts Jazz Master. Over his 34-year career, he's toured the world, working with legendary bandleader Maynard Ferguson as well as other top acts, including bassist Dave Holland and Wilco guitar soloist Nels Cline.

"I've done absolutely everything a trumpeter can do: weddings, ship christenings, fashion shows, a circus," Taylor says, downplaying his résumé. "I've got a tool, you hire me for a job." Between gigs, he composes music for commercials, film and video games—freelance work that allowed him to relocate to a quieter corner of the world.

Taylor and his wife, visual artist Catherine Ross Haskins, moved from Brooklyn to Westport after their son, Felix, was born in 2010. Taylor opened a private production studio and, between 2014 and 2017, he and Catherine curated a summer concert series in Ballard Park. The couple's eclectic lineups—a jazz nonet, a folk-opera composer, a guitar virtuoso and more—made Westport an unlikely destination for top-shelf music.

But the Haskins were looking to create a more permanent (and weatherproof) arts hub. Thinking big—11,000 square feet kind of big—they bought the abandoned Main Street mill in 2021 and self-financed its transformation. "It was a skeleton, just a shell," says Taylor, but beneath the jumble of machinery and decades of flour dust, he saw the building's solid bones and potential for knockout acoustics.

An initial design priority: "I wanted people to be able to see the original character of the building," Taylor says, while optimizing its natural acoustics. The 23-foot-high ceiling in the performance space—called the Listening Gallery—remains open to the beams, raw wood envelops the walls, floors have been left unfinished.

After three years in rehab, The Mill

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opened in stages. The musical lineup debuted last June with a sold-out show by guitar-bass duo Endless Field, followed in July by the first pours at the attached speakeasy and artist talks in the galleries soon after. Catherine, who has a degree in studio art from Dartmouth College, designed The Mill's seven galleries to foster immersive, accessible experiences—from a multimedia exploration of Ellen Berkenblit's creative process, to Ann Toebbe's 360-degree *Tornado Warning* installation and Jillian Mayer's oversized, sittable *Slumpies*.

Art spills into the Listening Gallery, where a 24-foot-long polypropylene sculpture by Baltimore-based artist Stephen Hendee is illuminated during performances, pulsating gold, purple, blue, green. It's physically impressive and a bit surreal—as if a virtual-reality gamescape has mushroomed out of the wall.

That where-am-I vibe is a good fit for the musical acts that Taylor books, which he says "cross genre lines and style borders." Last year's performances included the improvisational quartet SexMob and Helen Gillet, dubbed "a whirling dervish of the cello."

"I want people to experience something unexpected," says Taylor.

As a nod to modern attention spans, shows are limited to one hour and guests are asked to leave their phones in their pockets. "Come for one hour," Taylor says, "and be present," adding that the intimate 60-seat space encourages audience interaction.

Another social lubricator? The Knock, the Prohibition Era–inspired bar/restaurant tucked behind a corner of the Listening Gallery, where guests can sample inventive "knocktails" crafted with house-made syrups, tinctures and infusions. Taylor oversees the kitchen, serving tortilla de patatas, lentil ratatouille, and other seasonal, plant-based dishes that spotlight regionally sourced foods.

"We're not trying to be highbrow," he says. "We're trying to be creative." ▲

Find The Mill (themilladk.com, @themill_adk) at 6679 Main Street, in Westport. The Knock is open Thursday through Saturday, 5–9 p.m.

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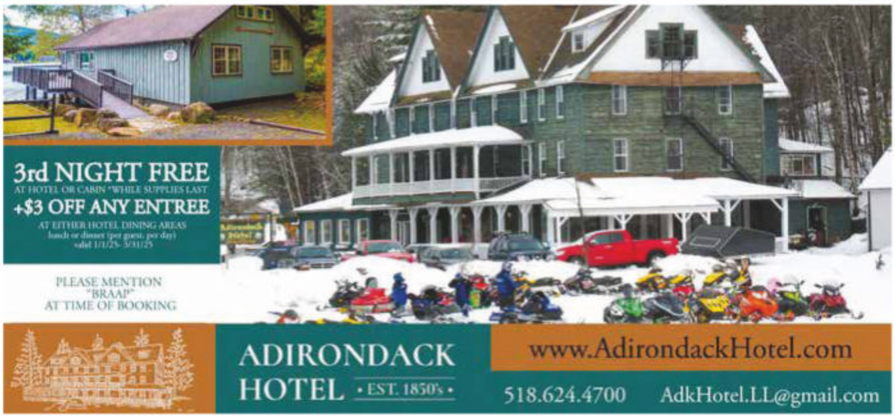
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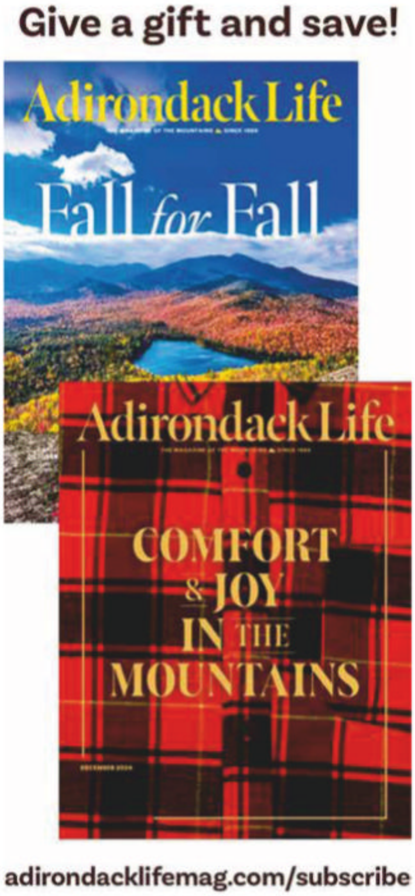
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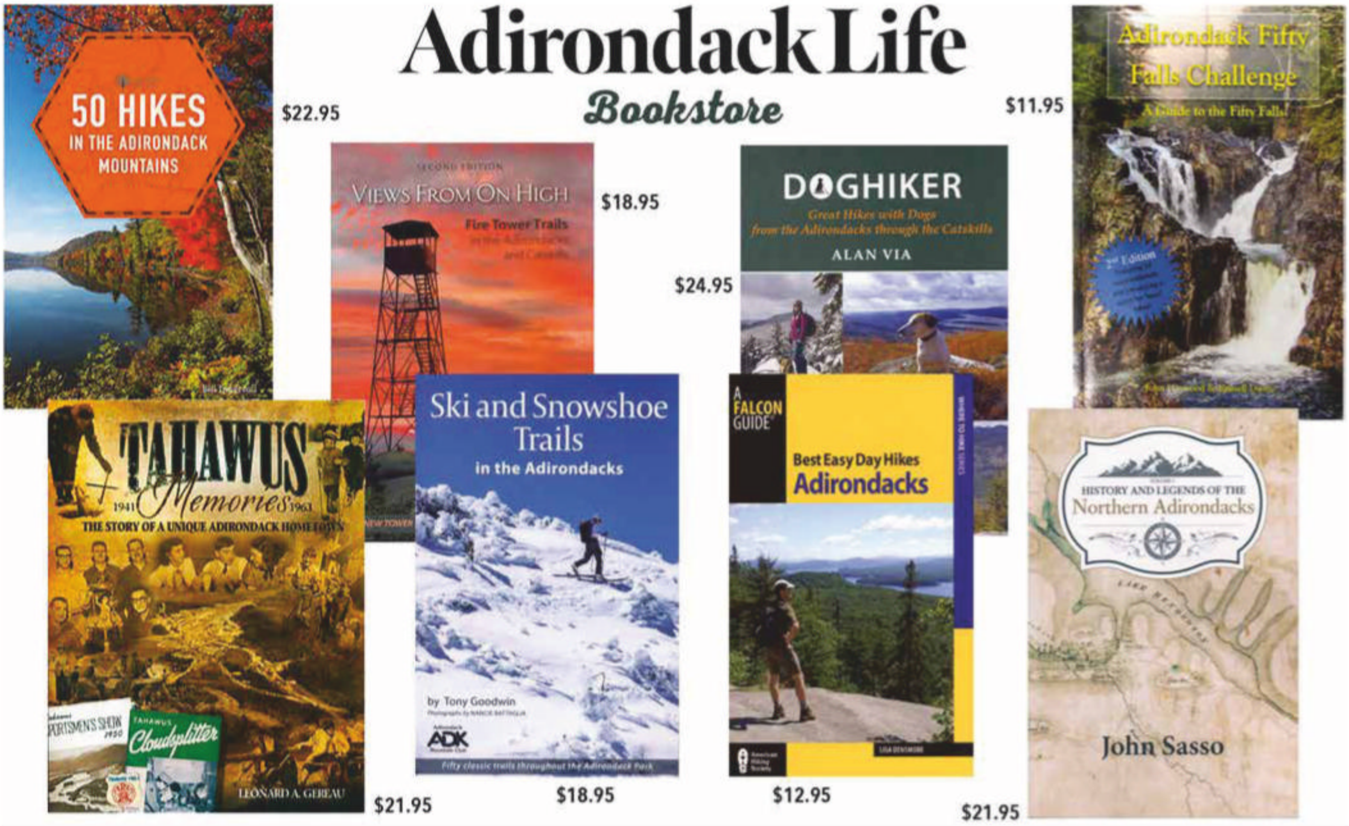
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Skinning Up

A father, a daughter and an early morning tradition

BY KATE MCCAHILL

It's still dark when my bedroom door creaks open. My father tiptoes in and sets the cat down beside me on the bed. I check the clock: 5:15. Last night we agreed on five; my father is being kind. Anyway, we both know that if light breaks and we aren't up there, the morning will be wasted, and we might as well have slept in.

Today we're skiing up Whiteface Mountain, which looms over my hometown of Lake Placid. We've hosted the Olympics twice, in 1932 and again in 1980, that famous year when the U.S. beat the Russians on the hockey rink. We're too small to ever host the Games a third time, but that doesn't stop tourists from flocking to see the old venues—the three ice rinks under one roof, and two ski jumps at the edge of town.

And then there's our Olympic mountain: our mighty Whiteface.

In the kitchen, my father whispers, "Today is a two-hat day."

As a rule, I have always hated two-hat days. But I say nothing to my father—I agreed to this, after all, and he is just trying to help—and I pull on two hats, one thin and one thick.

> **"I have followed my father into the mountains for as long as I can remember. While other kids were learning to walk, I was in our sloping backyard with my father, learning to ski."**

WHITEFACE MOUNTAIN PHOTOGRAPH BY NANCIE BATTAGLIA

“Ready?” my father whispers, and we squeeze out of the kitchen door, taking care not to let the cat out.

My teeth clack audibly as my father and I drive the winding road to the mountain, a road my father could navigate with his eyes closed. As we drive, the thermometer on the dashboard drops, digit by digit: 14 below, then 15, then 16. By the time we reach the parking lot, the thermometer reads 25 below. A few lights illuminate the trails, which glow blue beneath the star-flecked sky. Besides that, the mountain is silent and dark.

At the bottom of the trail, we peel open our climbing skins and press them to the bases of our skis so we’ll be able to walk uphill. The snow guns blast, and my father removes his hearing aids and puts them in his pocket. I can’t feel my hands. We flick our headlamps on, and light pools before us.

Just before we start to walk, my father shouts, “That’s Jupiter!” He is pointing at a faint gold dot hanging low in the sky, larger than the other stars.

“Oh!” I shout back. I try to make my voice light, bright, for this is my father, I love him, I love our mountain. But I am freezing, and all I’m thinking of is cold.

“It only gets better from here!” my father shouts encouragingly, and then he turns and begins to trudge.

I have followed my father into the mountains for as long as I can remember. While other kids were learning to walk, I was in our sloping backyard with my father, learning to ski. I remember the snow being deeper in those days, reaching to my shoulders and sometimes even higher. Snow fell on the day of my high-school graduation, in early June. The best Christmas gift I ever received came from my parents when I was 21: four knobby snow tires for my dented car.

Now, my father and I follow the line of the lift past mid-station and suddenly the wind is smacking us full on, streaks of snow snaking towards us over a sheet of sheer ice. For a second, I can’t breathe. Tears come.

My father pauses by one of the guns and turns.

“This is always the worst part!” he

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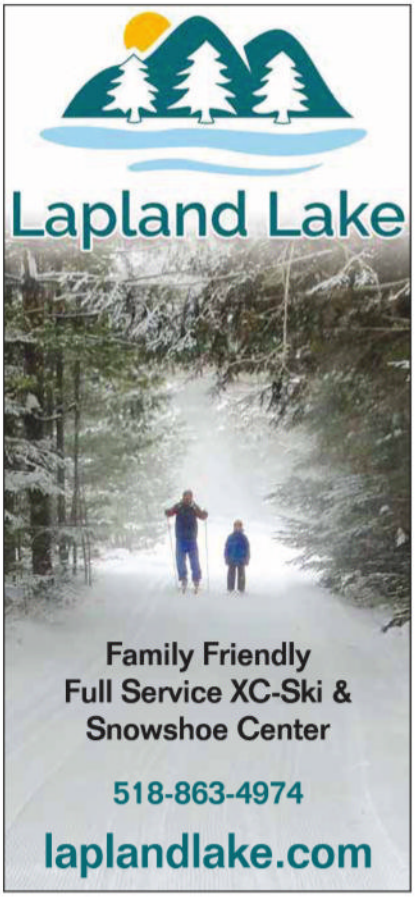
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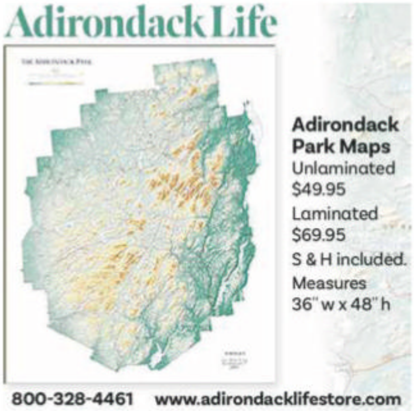
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shouts. “How ya doin’?”

“Bad!” I shout back; I can’t help it, I am doing bad and that’s all there is to it.

But my father can’t hear without his hearing aids.

“Good!” he shouts, and now he has turned back up the hill and is moving beneath the arcing plume of snow that blasts from the gun.

A bad day of skiing is better than a good day at work, my father always says, and I remind myself of this.

Halfway up, my father stops, finally, to turn and look.

“Can’t beat that with a stick!” he calls out. Behind us, a line of orange is pressing down onto the dark peaks, and the rest of the sky is turning pink. I squint and think I can see all the way to Lake Champlain.

This is my father’s church: the peaks, the trees, the winter air, bitingly clean.

We climb all the way to the top, my father and I, past the summit of Little Whiteface and right on up to the top of Chair 6, the mountain’s highest, coldest lift. This little hut—windblown, frostbitten—marks the start of the Olympic Downhill, and from where we stand, men and women in sleek suits and helmets have hurtled themselves steeply down, finishing their run 90 long seconds later, their legs burning, their faces flecked with frost, their eyes streaming and their lungs roaring for air.

My father points his skis downhill.

“Ready!” he shouts, an invitation instead of a question, and he doesn’t wait for my response.

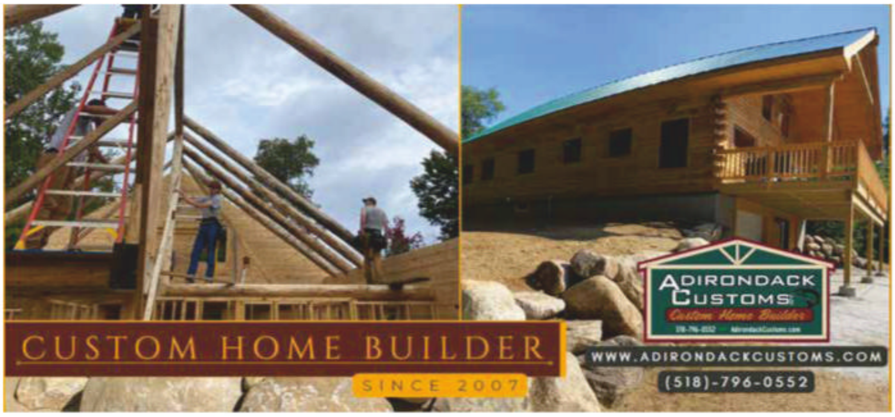
Afterwards, we drive home and eat toast and drink hot chocolate.

“We don’t have to prove anything to anyone, now,” my father says.

He finishes his breakfast, then goes upstairs and takes a shower and puts on clean clothes for work: pressed khakis, a button-down shirt, brown leather shoes, matching socks. He kisses my mother, puts his hearing aids in, and he’s gone.

My mother and I both understand, though, that part of him is still at Whiteface, skinning up.

“Skinning Up” first appeared in our February 2018 issue.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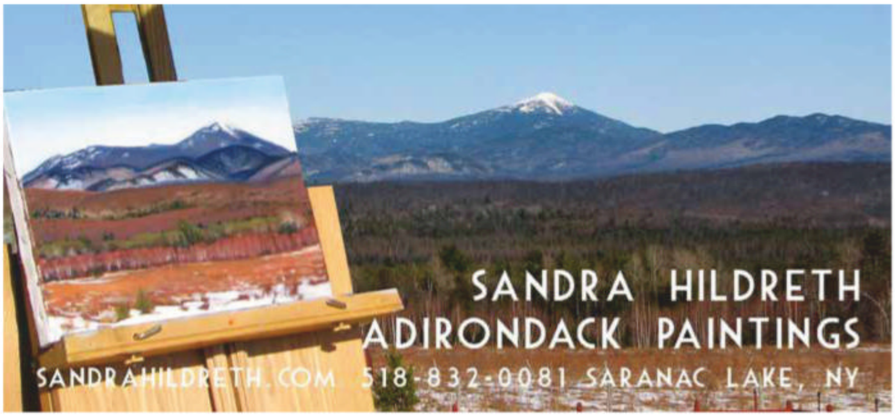
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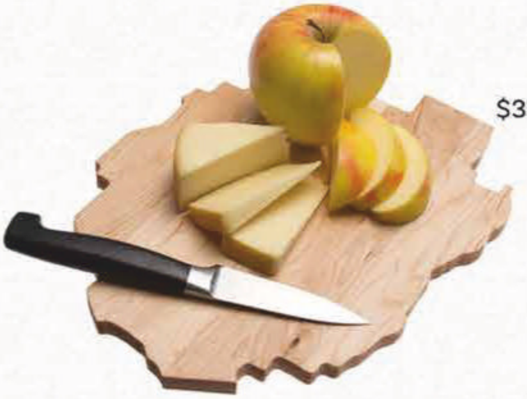

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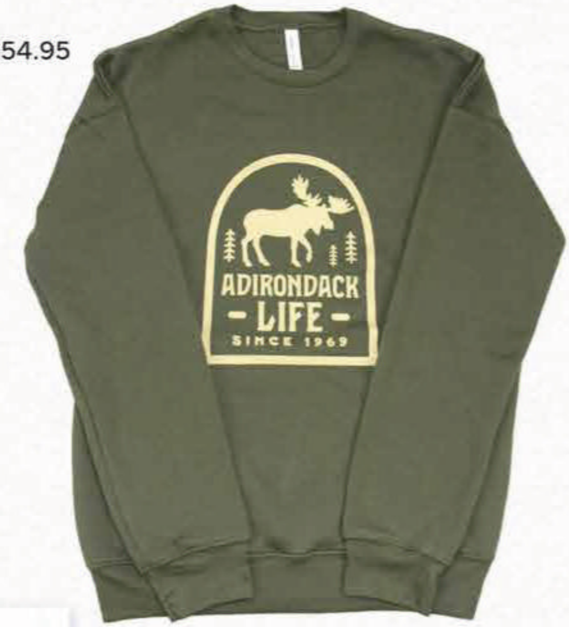
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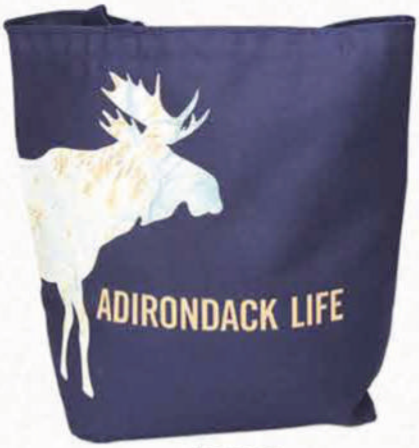
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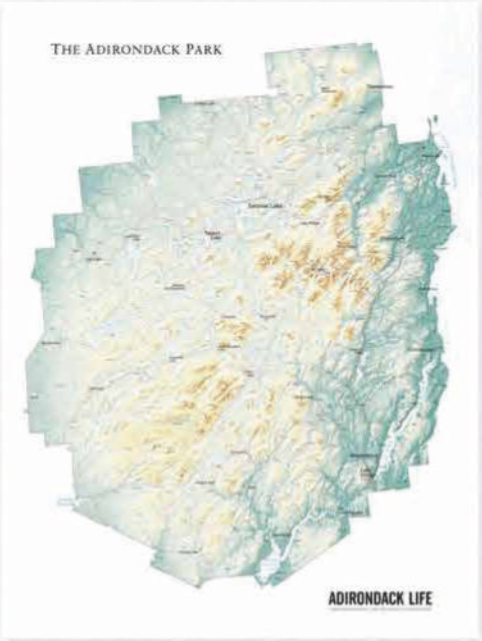
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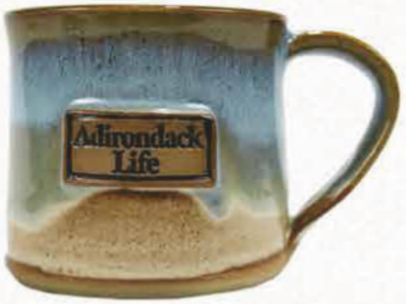
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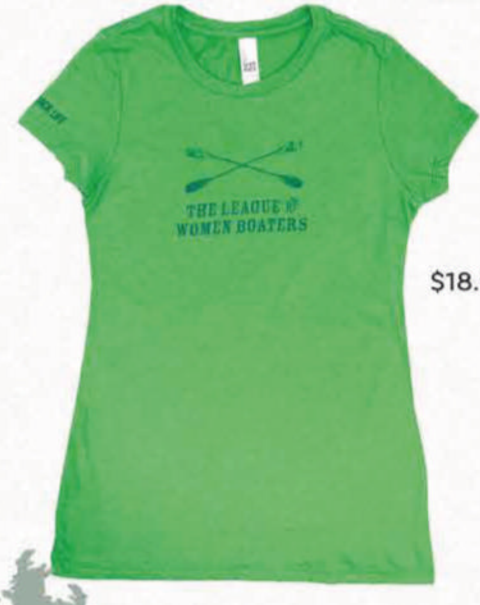
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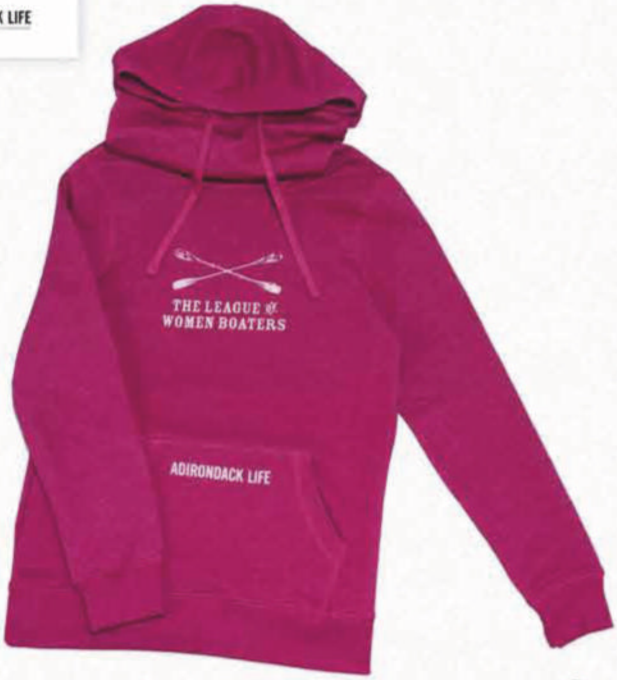
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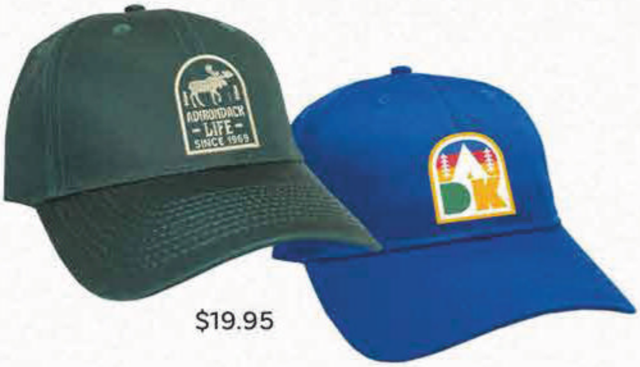
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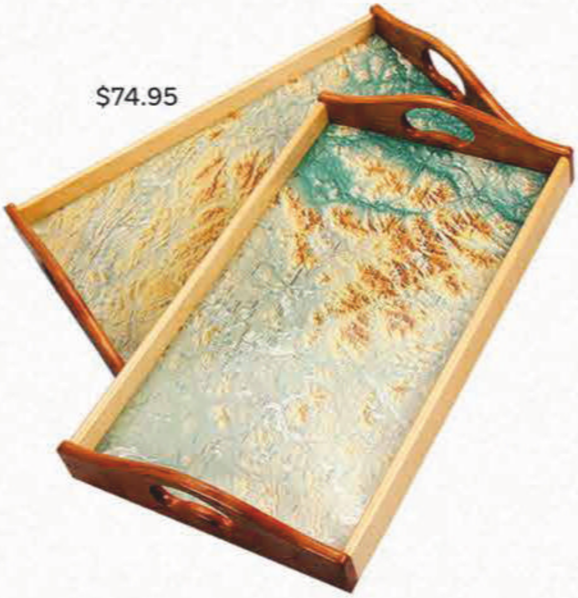

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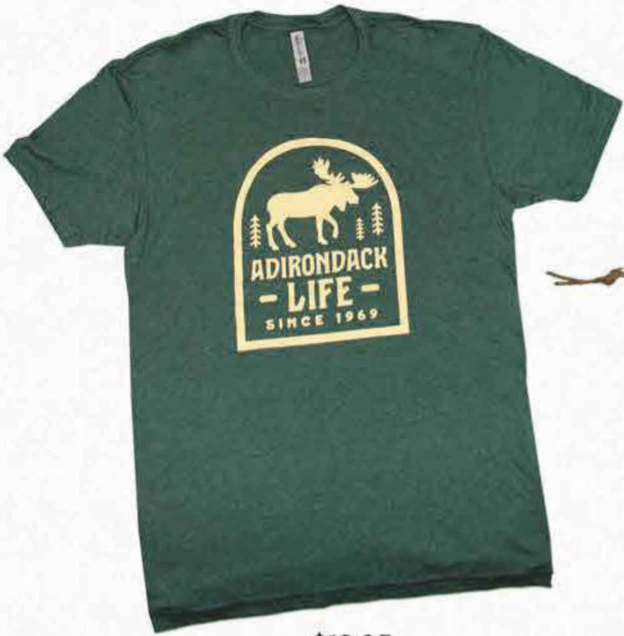
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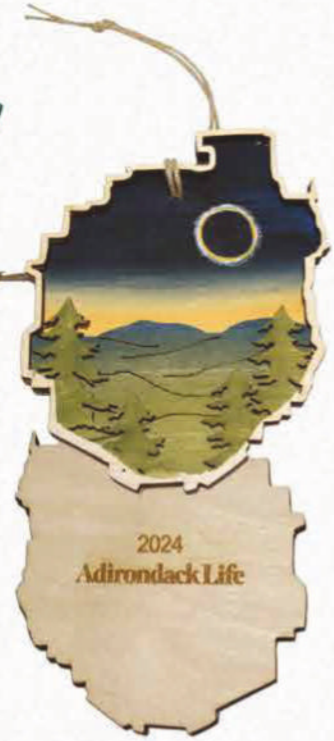
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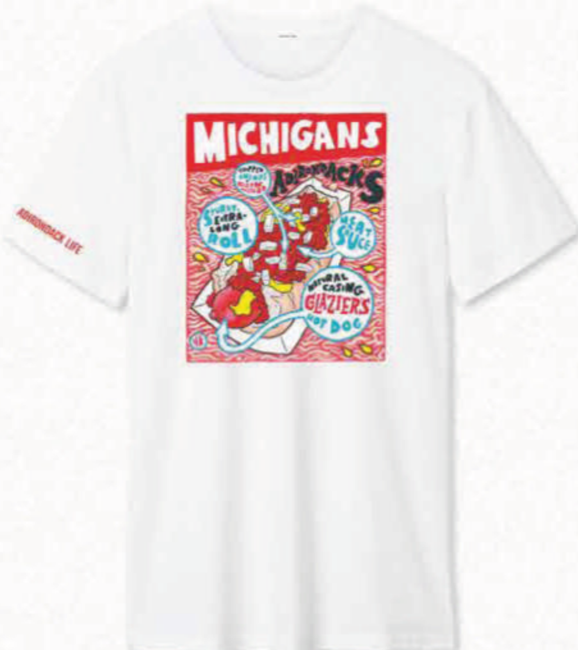
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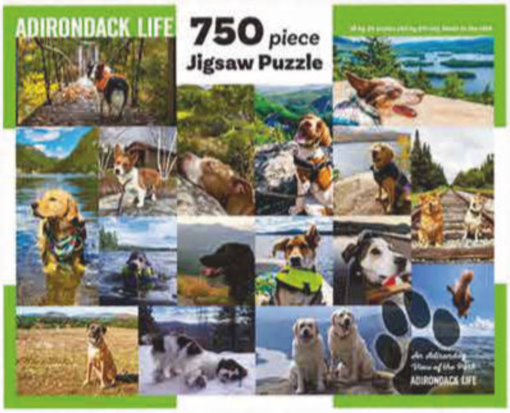
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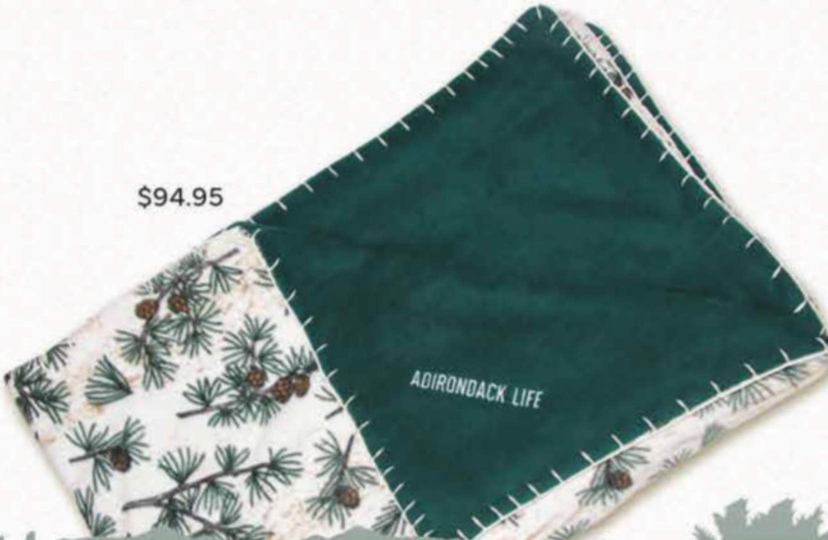
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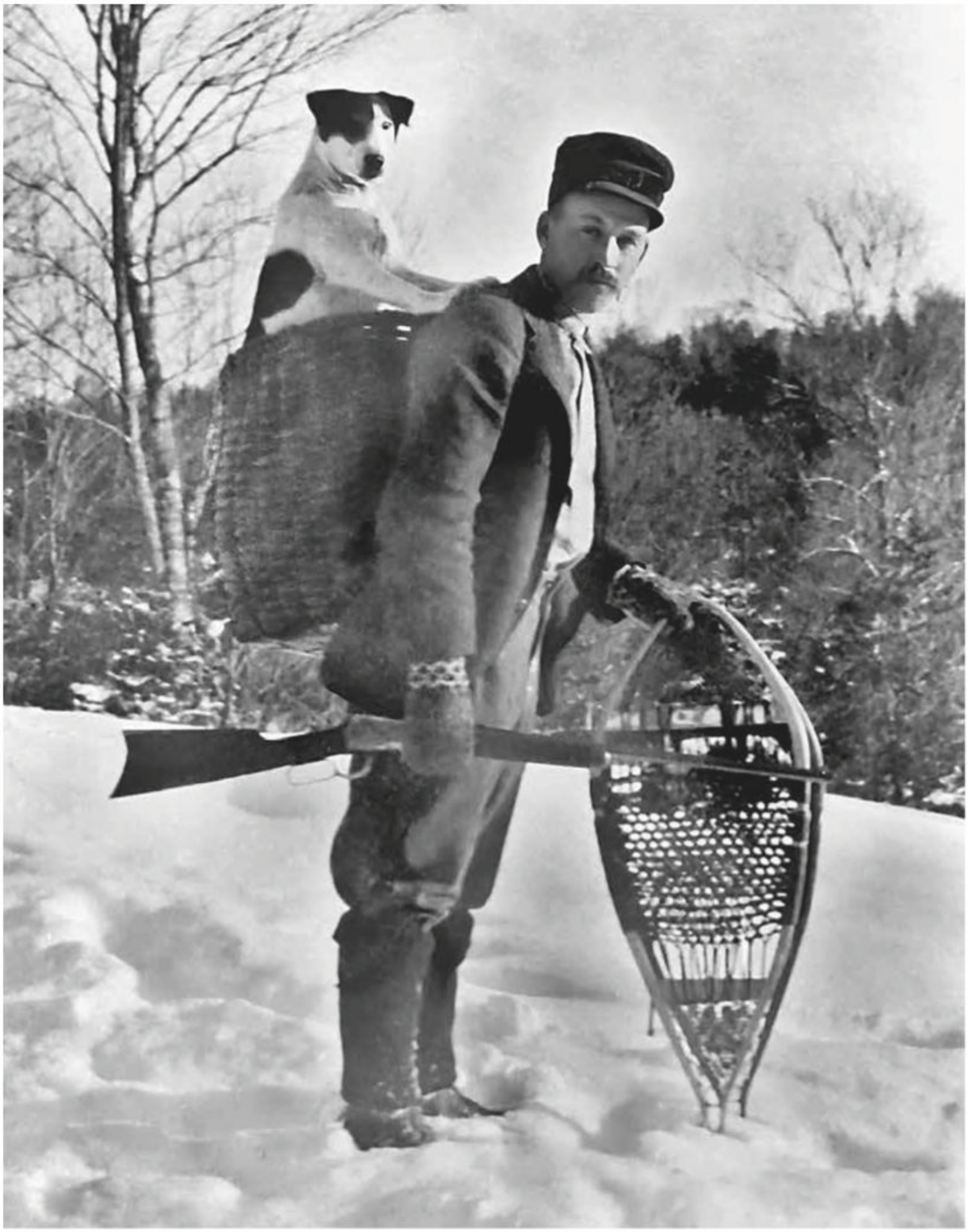

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NEWCOMB HISTORICAL MUSEUM

In 1802 Elisha Bissell, a descendant of a *Mayflower* Pilgrim, settled in Newcomb. He helped found the remote Adirondack town, and his heirs have had a continuous presence there for nearly 200 years.

One was Augustus Bissell, known as Gusty. In the early 1890s Gusty cobbled together a living as a logger, farmer, wilderness guide and caretaker at Great Camp Santanoni, Robert and Anna Pruyn's 13,000-acre estate. Gusty and his wife, Annabelle, spent much of their early years together in Santanoni's "Caretaker's House," a two-story structure nearly a quarter mile from the main lodge. Annotations in a Pruyn family photo album also identify the residence as the "Bissell House."

Gusty would guide the Pruyns' guests on day hikes and fishing and hunting trips, accompanied by his canine companion, Taters, pictured with him above. —*Peter Benoit*

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